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*Those Young Married People*

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NOVELS BY  
JOHN TRAVERS  
(Mrs. Bell, O.B.E.)

THE MORTIMERS

A SERVANT WHEN HE  
REIGNETH

THOSE YOUNG MARRIED  
PEOPLE

HODDER AND STOUGHTON LTD.  
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# *Those Young Married People*

*A Novel*

BY

JOHN TRAVERS

(MRS. BELL, O.B.E.)

AUTHOR OF "THE MORTIMERS," "HAPPINESS"  
"SAHIBLOG," "SECOND NATURE"

HODDER AND STOUGHTON  
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“Whoso sweareth unto his neighbour and  
disappointeth him not, though it were to  
his own hindrance.”



Khyber Pass is Soldier's Road,  
High around rise hills of danger,  
Ghilzais march with guarded load,  
Woman comes and goes as Stranger,  
Man's for rifles, loot, and cattle,  
God is here the Lord of Battle.

ANON.

"STRANGE woman that you are ! With your feet shod in reptiles' skins and the fur of beasts over your breast," Thomas Trench remarked whimsically. His brilliant eyes masked a keen scrutiny with a twinkle.

Eleanor Trench flung her sables on the sofa and held out a slim foot in a beautifully made lizard skin shoe to the blazing coal fire. Electric light poured a hard and discriminating investigation upon her tall form and well-bred features which suffered the declaration of forty years. She was thin to a fault, but remained emaciated by sheer determination. Her firm and faded lips wrote a signature to her will across her handsome face. Her eyes were a cold blue and the arches above them were set in a thoughtful brow. Her hands were delicate and bony. They were very white and all her fair skin was of excellent texture. An air of significance distinguished this woman, as though aristocracy had emphasised itself in her.

"My shoes are mere bravado. I am terrified of creeping things when they live and move," Eleanor said with a downward glance. She had a hard voice, but it commanded attention. In its inflections,

and in her whole manner, there was always a definite courtesy.

She was an unself-conscious person, and she arranged and rearranged a curl by her ear with grave interest, peering into the mirror above the fireplace. Lady Trench had not observed herself age without turning a hair: she turned hers back quickly from grey to gold.

"I wonder what on earth I should do with a pin-curl," murmured her husband, watching her.

"Give it away to some lady-love, I imagine," she said, and looked over her shoulder to meet his eyes.

The General was lounging in great comfort on the chintz sofa in the big drawing-room of Flagstaff House, and he played idly with his wife's fur wrap. A smile lit up his attractive face and he changed his voice to a caressing note as he answered, "Something fair and false, for her, what? You are in sole possession of the genuine home-grown article." He passed his big hand over his head and added, "All that is left of it."

Eleanor met that deep note in his voice, that flattering and intimate approach in his manner, with the same acute sensitiveness to its charm that she had experienced throughout their twenty years of married life. It was an exasperating, enslaving, cruelly disappointing experience. "I wonder Prudence Graham has not made it stand on end," she said. And she said it very pleasantly.

"So *that's* what she is thinking about," mused Trench, but he welcomed her remark. He was teased by a desire to discuss Prudence Graham. To talk of her with his wife gave him the comfort of confession and absolution. In such matters the General commanding the Peshawar district was a naïve man.

"I have a soft place in my heart for that young woman," he admitted. "I like her energy."

"Youth," said the wife aged forty.

"The late Prime Minister is a bit older than I am : he has it. Not the ordinary stir of blood and brain, but an amazing force. It is an interesting quality in Mrs. Graham : it agitates her curiosity, her *joie de vivre*, her whole individuality, until some day it will achieve remarkable power."

"She is delightful to look at. So fresh and graceful and vivid," observed Eleanor.

"That's not it," Thomas Trench retorted rather impatiently. How well Eleanor knew that irritation about any woman whom he greatly admired. "You put the wrong emphasis on her looks. The fact is that most women in a place like this bore you and me intensely. She is never a bore. There is a lot in her. But I am not sure that Graham is the right man to manage her. She might take a bad toss."

"It's no more than dropping a stitch, knitting. They fall lightly nowadays," said his wife.

"Don't you believe it," replied the General earnestly. "There is such a thing as a little flutter, and it is further to fall than when you were a bride, but if it comes to a crash it is down and out ; just as it always was, for a woman."

"How satisfactory. Then you know where you are," remarked Lady Trench darkly.

"But she does not look where she is going," pursued Trench. "Do you think she will keep straight ?"

Eleanor's heart grew hot with indignation that her solicitude for the spiritual welfare of the puss was thus taken for granted by the man who spoke. But she showed nothing of her vexation as she answered,



"She likes to make the rules. That is never a very safe ambition for a pretty girl."

"She sees a great deal of that fellow Warwick," growled the General. His assumed air of disinterested regret so exasperated his wife that she was almost provoked into a remark that might have increased his jealousy.

"Oh, there is nothing in that," she assured him.

"I can't understand the way these young husbands tolerate men hanging round their wives," said the General resentfully. "It is a very bad example, especially out here in the East."

"It has always been like that," said the woman of forty.

"I would not have stood it for a moment," her husband told her; and once again his possessive touch on her heartstrings elated and yet wounded her.

"Suppose I take to that sort of thing in my old age?" she murmured.

"Then just watch me," said the General grimly.

"As an example?" She was not always mistress of her quick tongue. She was dismayed that it had now betrayed her into an indiscretion.

"Certainly, certainly," replied Trench, his eyes hardening. That was always his attitude towards those passing affairs of his—that he had ordinary friendship to give and gave it, that he never made himself or the lady conspicuous, that Eleanor had not the slightest grounds for criticism.

Both husband and wife welcomed the intervention of a third person when Mrs. Molesworth came into the room and demonstrated an almost wild satisfaction at having arrived there. "Well, here I am! How splendid. I thought I should never reach you dead or alive. Sentries and guards all over the place, and millions of barking dogs—so much more

alarming than a quiet little bite. Really, Tom, I can't get over seeing you in all your glory, commanding a district. And Eleanor frightening all the young into fits. (How nice you look, Eleanor! I love that hat.) And me just a major's wife! I'm sure I'm thankful. I shouldn't know what to do with this Peshawar crowd." She spoke on one prolonged note of exclamation and only paused to laugh.

May Molesworth had been at school with Eleanor Trench and the two women belonged to the same county. They shared a love of old furniture, beautiful gardens, and good clothes. It was only in London that their tastes differed. Eleanor had gone to Court with enthusiasm and remained in close touch with the great landowners and their families who opened magnificent houses for the season. But Lord Manson's daughter used to cry, "Eleanor behaves exactly like an old-fashioned duchess in London. So unnecessary. Now I behave exactly like the ladies the gay dukes know and the duchesses are too grand to know. It is much better fun." May allied herself with the smart set and was generally in debt but never in tears. Both girls married young and made less brilliant matches than they had expected. They did not lose a rather jealous interest in each other, and Eleanor had been well pleased when she heard that the highland battalion to which Major Molesworth belonged was ordered to Peshawar. His wife was a plump little person with a tiny head well poised on a long round throat. She had the funniest face; not pretty but very expressive, very humorous and wide awake and soft.

"You always remind me of Marie Tempest, May," said Trench, looking down on her from his six foot two.

"There's something about you——"

"I'll thank you not to have too accurate a memory

where I am concerned. Everybody here thinks I am thirty-five. At least everybody who believes what I say. If you repeat a lie often enough—that's the Coué system, you know, and I've the greatest faith in it. Now, for goodness' sake, you two, tell me all the local scandals. I know nothing about the people here and it is too dull for words."

"The General is the last person on earth to hear the local scandals. They are kept from him," said Trench philosophically.

"Trust Eleanor to ferret them out! And be officially oblivious. I know my Eleanor," retorted May. "Have you given up behaving as a lady should, dearest? You work on the wrong system, you see. Now, I make men treat me like gentlemen and I treat them the way they like best!" She gave a happy little chuckle.

"You are behind the times, May," said Eleanor tersely. "Young married women don't have a system, don't elaborate, don't proclaim their art; they would tell you that they do as they 'damn well please,' and leave it at that."

"I don't mean to learn any new tricks," retorted Mrs. Molesworth. "My old ones will have to last my time. Everyone here seems very thrilled with that Mrs. Graham. She is a good-looking brat; who was she?"

"Oh, it takes me back centuries to hear you ask, 'Who was she?' like that," cried Eleanor. "My dear, who cares to-day? I have not the slightest idea. Jones, or something, in all probability." Lady Trench was conscious that her husband would soon betray his personal interest in this conversation. He stood astride the hearthrug; his lean dark face with its domineering nose, threatening watchful eyes, and tender mouth, was now alert and keen.

"She was christened Prudence," he remarked dryly.

"She has lost the label, I should imagine," said May Molesworth, bubbling over with mirth. "My dears, I went to tea with her yesterday; and there she was, just dismounting by her verandah when I arrived. Wearing breeches, no coat, and her shirt tucked in. A cigarette in her mouth, with a holder as long as a walking-stick. Her hat simply jammed on, but she looked a perfect duck of a thing. Such good legs! She is really beautifully made. There were Indian menservants about, and an orderly with his beard twisted up and a big turban—you know the kind. Those breeches of hers——! Well, it takes a good deal to startle me, but here in Peshawar, it did not seem very suitable."

"All vanity and no pride," said Eleanor with a glint in her steady eyes.

"I don't understand Graham allowing it," growled the General, who expected every man to do his duty.

"Oh, *he* was as good as a play!" cried Mrs. Molesworth. "I like that man. After he had said 'How d'ye do?' he just gave one look at her and remarked, 'The breeches again. Funny why you think the wife ought to wear 'em,' and off he went. When he came back he was wearing a knitted sports skirt of hers. Put on over his tennis flannels. He had his tea like that. Wouldn't take the skirt off, though of course he was ruining it. He is so big, you see; he stretched it and stretched it. She laughed, but I don't think she liked it. Then she began to ballyrag him and I have never seen any human being so violent as he was. Very gentle at first, but when she got him going he treated her as though she was a mere boy. And the skirt—absolutely unwearable now!"

"Odd thing, the way your clothes agitate the male," said Trench.

"It is the bill that agitates my male," said May.

"Yes, that's part of the infernal business," agreed Trench, and added, "'Beauty unadorned' is only admirable if it is beauty fully revealed."

Eleanor listened with a consciousness that her own clothes were above criticism. She was well armed, and to the end that full value should be received she relentlessly maintained her slender lines, fasted and exercised to preserve her figure. Clothes seduced her husband: he was susceptible at that point and in that respect she intended to hold her own to the last. Her efforts were repaid, for she had never lost his admiration.

She had gone deep into one queer elusive aspect of our absurd civilisation and she spoke with confidence when she said, "Captain Graham is a Round-head. The type survives in every cantonment. He calls a wealthy worldling like Major Warwick, who is a survival of the Cavalier breed, 'a poodlefaker.' Captain Graham is a reformer, a Liberal. He has the power of hard-headed thinking on social questions of the Puritan. And he shows the spirit of adventure of those old Pilgrim Fathers. He is at home on this warring Frontier. You can see that at once. But I am sure he'd like his wife to wear quiet, very modest frocks."

"A modern Cromwell," said Thomas Trench lightly. Eleanor had touched him with that word "poodlefaker," for he knew she would place him among the Cavaliers. "Or a narrow-minded prig?" He had become hostile at once.

"Not a prig," exclaimed May Molesworth. "Oh, goodness gracious, no."

Trench made a quick, impatient gesture. "Lord,

there is nothing so intriguing as human beings. Make them impersonal, call them nations, political parties, a class, a government, and they represent work and invoke our intellectual qualities. But call a woman Mary, make her *personal*, and you can squeeze the last drop of a man's blood out of his heart to get a trinket for her."

"I wonder what quality in that girl attracted Captain Graham," Mrs. Molesworth questioned.

"She is dramatic," answered the General promptly. "She gives the sense of action all the time."

The woman they discussed was not three hours' journey away from them, motoring swiftly through a wild land. Around her crowded tanned and barren hills on which harsh sunshine quivered. Rock and scrub reflected light and shade in tones as subtly variegated as the colouring of some wild beast's brown pelt. The intruding road by which she travelled seemed more audacious than a rope that spins forth to lasso the strength of a rebellious bull. High above it huge crates swung through the Pass on overhead wires, and a half-finished railway sapped slowly and grimly towards the frontier of Afghanistan. A motor charabanc lumbered along crammed with armed tribesmen. Fortified villages from which rose solitary towers, like periscopes, made all the valleys formidable. Eight battalions maintained the right of way for thirty dangerous miles.

The motor stopped as an uncouth but joyous individual, with a rifle and ammunition and a coloured fringe in his turban, challenged its occupants. The General's aide-de-camp, Dick Davis, obediently produced the permit which entitled him and Ronald Warwick and Prudence Graham to proceed onwards, past Landi Khana, to the five-barred gate into the Amir's territory. The Pathan received this official

document with an earnest gravity, scrutinised it upside down as he was unable to read or write in any language, returned it to Davis, and stood aside to let the British advance. Prudence laughed.

"A good effort that," remarked Warwick.

"He's one of the Khassadars," Dick Davis told the occupants of the back seat. He had given them information with surprising perseverance all day. Now he pointed to a wall which crept like a gigantic caterpillar along the crest of a mountain on their left. "Buddhist remains. Old Alexander and his push must have seen it when they rolled up here."

"Thank you, darling," said Mrs. Graham, "I don't care two hoots about all that, but if you must get it off your chest you must."

"You insisted on coming," Dick gently rejoined.

"It is the thing to do. And I hoped some Afridi would take a pot shot at you and I should behave with extraordinary courage and become the heroine of the Frontier," she cried. "Besides, I love it."

She spoke truthfully. Here, in this wildness, she was surrounded only by armed men. To create association and atmosphere there were the tradition of frontier wars, the history of the Khyber Rifles, innumerable blood feuds of cruel Afridis, and such severe objects as forts, guns, and barbed wire entanglements. She experienced a delicious consciousness that her two companions were fighting men and that in this place she held for them the potent charm of the irresponsible sex, the thing to be protected, the adorable feminine. Her small face was pale, and her black hair shadowed it like night encroaching upon a white, dim flower in twilight. Her black eyes and crimson lips were emotional: not with the slackening languor of senses touched by sentiment, but with the vigour of a passionate vitality.

The motor ran through Landi Khana where a Gurkha regiment held the last half-mile between India and Afghanistan.

"I know what I miss!" cried Prudence, with quick glances from side to side at grim billets. "Just as on the sea you miss the land—you are *without* it—here, all through this Khyber Pass, I miss luxury. There is a total absence of it."

"Precious little intellectual life here at all," said Ronald Warwick in his scornful way. "The whole thing is sheer force. Character and armament."

"No women. Nothing of art. No entertainment. Only those things which are necessary to maintain strength. It is very queer," Prudence said.

Ronald Warwick put out his hand and laid it on hers. "Inhuman," he murmured. "I'd hate the place if you were not sitting here beside me."

Dick shouted to them, without looking round, "Those Gurkhas loathe a Pathan. They almost spit when they see one."

"Why don't they shoot? Spitting is a gentle business," called back Prudence.

"The Khassadars are part of our show. We preserve them: no poaching permitted," Davis told her, and brought the motor to a standstill in front of a white gate and a notice board which forbade anyone to go beyond it into Afghan territory. There was no wall nor fence: merely an isolated gate signifying a barrier. The three English people got out and stood, rather restlessly, looking up at the gaunt hills, while Davis pointed out the last British post and the Afghan fort a short distance away. Prudence suddenly darted off and danced hither and thither a few paces the foreign side of the gate. "Here we come gathering nuts and may, nuts and may, nuts and may!" she sang to arid desolation.



Dick's simple freckled face looked grave. "Not fair, Mrs. Graham. Come back," he said.

"There's no danger. Don't fuss," she cried, and pirouetted about with little fantastic gestures: a dancing girl in high Asia.

"It is not in the permit," he remonstrated. "You are taking an ell."

"Poof! Red tape!" derided Prudence. "Why shouldn't I, if it amuses me? It's all right, isn't it, Ronny?"

"Davis is running this show," Warwick answered. He was of middle height, with well-cut features and a bored expression.

"You'll boast of having been into Afghan territory before you are a day older and then the fat will be in the fire," young Dick said ruefully.

"Why need anyone care?" Prudence laughed, and stood on the forbidden side of the gate, leaning against it.

"I'd like to take a snapshot of you. A figure of divine impudence," said Warwick adoring her.

"Observe the letter of the law, please," Dick urged stolidly. "That side is their funeral, not ours; and they don't invite you."

The whole scene might have been constructed to illustrate the formidable nature of Frontiers and Treaties. Everywhere force was marshalled, defence and defiance clearly defined, mutual precautions taken, places of vantage held. The social and spiritual adventure involved in all serious contracts here animated every visible action of man. Only the woman missed the meaning of it all.

"Come back," said Dick, very politely.

"'Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,'" chanted Prudence. "All right, there is nothing doing this side. I will return to the dear old British Empire."

And she joined the two officers with a gay kiss of her hand to the troubled heights of Afghanistan and its observant fort.

Once more the motor curved and climbed and descended as the three returned swiftly to Peshawar. Warm within her furs Prudence hugged the consciousness of being the one Englishwoman in the Khyber that day, very close to Ronald Warwick beside her, tantalisingly remote from the British officers keeping watch and ward on the bitter crests of hills. To a daughter of a race in which the women greatly outnumber the men it was a supremely stimulating novelty. The male nature of this society was overwhelmingly evident. The forts and posts held soldiers only.

"See those fellows, Mrs. Graham? They are relieving that picquet." Davis pointed to little khaki figures climbing high among the rocks.

Prudence lifted her eyes to them and thought how they would have none but the stars for company while she danced in Peshawar that night.

A khalifa came slowly to the end of its day's march towards Kabul. Heavy laden with the produce of Hindustan, the long line of camels swayed and shuffled through the dust. There were thousands of them; veterans, and men in the very prime of life, and rosy-cheeked boys, all dirty and picturesque and armed, rode on the uncouth beasts or led them. These Afghans plodded towards the setting sun, contrasting strangely in their primitive organisation with the remorseless advance of iron rails. Khasadars escorted them, and as they swept through a valley there was beauty in their tribal movement, the grace and vigour of a living host.

"Those Ghilzais aren't a patch on the Powindahs who came through the Gumal Pass in Waziristan,"

Dick informed Prudence, and Warwick turned to murmur in his companion's ear: "All barbarians: a fiercer or a tamer breed, but nothing else to choose between 'em. Think of eight battalions—one British, and the rest Indian with British officers—condemned to this sort of life for twelve months, or more. Nothing of culture exists except what a man's mind can carry and import. Any officer here who had lost his memory could appreciate European and Asiatic civilisations only by what he found to-day in this Khyber Pass: caravan or railway, sheepskin or khaki, knife or bayonet. Not much in it."

"What would he do with *me*?" Prudence promptly speculated in a low voice. "Veil me, or turn his back on me as all our Army must here?"

"He wouldn't know how to appreciate you," Warwick said. "This is a stupefying existence, I tell you."

A Sikh havildar in the shadow of a cliff watched the motor pass and, unseen, saluted the British officers. His home was near Amritsar. He had fought at Neuve Chapelle and been present when Jerusalem surrendered. He had marched footsore, but highly pleased, into Bagdad. His own village was much intimidated now by Akalis. He regarded life in the Khyber as unduly strenuous, but very intelligently organised and well administered. He watched a platoon of Dogras marching by with friendly and professional criticism. Hindus and good folk, strong to fight and not given to making trouble. Young Dick, too, approved of them and commented on their merits to Warwick as they passed.

"Oh be quiet, Dick! I have quite enough of that conversation from Paul," exclaimed Prudence rebelliously.

"Right-oh," said Dick with resignation. "But they are rather important, you know."

"Not to me," said Prudence.

Davis could hear her energetic voice emphasising some confidence that she was whispering to Ronald. He caught the words, "I don't see why I should spoil my life," and again, "Oh, it is more my fault than his probably, but the point is that I want to end the whole thing before it is too late."

"Those two might as well be in Piccadilly," thought Dick, as his eyes greeted the ferocity of Ali Masjid. So many armies had passed this way, so much blood had dripped into dust, so much youth had met its immortality here, where the rocks echoed to the blasting of sappers and eastern contractors sweated and grew rich.

Beyond Jamrud they were on level ground again in the Peshawar Vale; a wide fertility encircled by hills of danger. It was necessary to pass the barbed wire and be within the cantonment by 6.30. The playing ground of the great Mahomedan College was uproarious with cheers over the finals of a tournament as they passed. Prudence turned to look back at the masculine kingdom she had visited and perforce left before sunset. She exulted to know that its young men would come down to this soft valley and seek for her and all that she stood for.

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Our towns are copied fragments from our breast,  
And all man's Babylons strive but to impart  
The grandeurs of his Babylonian heart.

FRANCIS THOMPSON.

EVERY city has a character, and its citizens develop various well-defined associations for the promotion of some common object. There is in London every kind of social community, from the Court of St. James to the foreign element at Limehouse; every variety of system, from a university to a Primrose League; all forms of organisation, including Trade Unions and the Athenæum Club. Fonts in churches and acres of cemeteries mark the conventionally ceremonious début and exit of its inhabitants, while Crusaders' tombs and vast railway stations alike betray their enduring restlessness. Body, soul, and spirit leave their mark on a London which can be measured, assessed, seen, and felt; which is destructible and marvellous, but is less mysterious, awful, and influential than the man who breeds there, the Londoner. His standard is the standard for the world; if his credit diminishes the value of gold reacts to it from Honolulu to Hong Kong. If his Parliament leaves off making laws to punch the stiff noses of its members the self-control of assemblies in Delhi or Buenos Ayres is weakened. If he repudiates his contracts honour perishes in every mart and in all the lesser kingdoms of the earth. But if the character of London be great the

character of Peshawar is merely notorious. Its triple areas are defined as a city, civil lines, and cantonments. The first shoots when irritable; the second, deploring this impulse, judicially orders people to be shot; and the third shoots, or is shot, according to commands received and the luck of a soldier. The city is tightly girt by a high wall and has massive gates named after its rivals or rulers. Its illiterate mind and gossiping habits are betrayed by the name of the jostling thoroughfare which is called The Street of the Story Tellers, and leads into the street of the Copper Smiths, where hammers echo all day long, and the northern sun strikes fire from burnished wares. Its houses toss upward in irregular tiers built of empty wine-cases, and on level roofs its veiled Mahomedan women 'eat the air.' Melons from Kabul, wild honey from the vale, and nuts not harder than the brown faces of bargaining men, carpets from Central Asia, and cheap books from the world's million printing presses, are exposed as the city's merchandise. Fingers which itch for the knife or the trigger's murderous efficiency do waxwork primly, tracing elegant stalks and white geese upon chaste cotton curtains. It is an intolerant place, with a wild will of its own. The master mind dwells in civil lines, where Government House, surrounded by a gracious garden, looks over its august shoulder at the Fort, and wonders whether the wielder of the sword or the pen will be the next offender called to account by a question in Westminster for some stern activity reported by a garrulous wire.

Into the sedate quarters of the Political Officer for the Khyber Pass come burly pensioned sardars and men from all the fastnesses of the Tirah. Into the big-hearted mission hospital come victims of

blood feud, or aeroplanes, or other casualty. Into their own solid Lodge go the Freemasons. The untidy shops of the saddar bazaar know the British soldiers from Roberts Barracks and the sergeant's tired wife in a tonga. And the Club, among pepper-trees, and fig-trees and spreading mulberries, is set apart exclusively for civil officials, military officers, and missionaries, with their womenfolk; though its gates admit indifferently servants, babus, tonga-wallahs, chauffeurs, gardeners, and bandsmen.

Danger, flowers, and sandfly fever weave their potent influence in Peshawar. And no man in civil lines or cantonments has casual relations with her, but is there of set purpose, to develop or restrain her. In return she criticises them ceaselessly, challenging every western theory; self-centred, vain and attractive.

Paul Graham was a Londoner, the fourth son of a lawyer who died leaving his own affairs in chaos and his clients' affairs in perfect order. Paul passed through Sandhurst into the Indian Army in 1912, spent one year with an Irish regiment at Quetta, and joined the 10th Punjabis in the blind year of 1913. From 1914 to 1919 he served out of India in various theatres of war, with an interval of seven months at the Depot at Jhelum, and brief sojourns with other battalions of the Indian Army. In 1922 he found himself at Peshawar and deeply indignant that the 10th Punjabis had become the third battalion of the second something Punjab regiment—a vulgar fraction instead of a unit, and a lost identity to its hundreds of pensioners. Paul had come through the war with a wife, a military cross, an insignificant wound, and terrible malaria in his blood. He found peace very expensive, unremunerative, and depressing. He disliked dancing, senior staff officers, a

dinner at the General's, politics, and any signs of swagger, bucking, or poodlefaking. He loved a good jest and a good companion. He liked method and fair play. For England he had a secret passion, but forbore to mention it. His handling of Indian soldiers was tactful and the training of his cocker spaniel was very serious and successful. Intellectual pedagogues would have criticised him as lacking in scholarship; journalists would have discovered his reluctance to substitute opinions for deeds; and the successful business man would have noted with pain an absence of brilliant speculation and egotistical competition in his mental outlook. But men of action found him very companionable to the heart, for his was a simple and honourable soul. The Army gave him a good name, but his wife, Prudence, threatened to give him a bad one, at which his disciplined temper came slowly to the boiling point.

The quarrel began when their tastes differed, but it assumed serious proportions because the energy of the wife demanded a scene as an outlet. Her visit to the Khyber Pass had whetted her keen interest in herself as a woman; her imagination was astir. A dance at the Club had given that rhythm to emotion which quickens all its tides. She was out on the love-path; strenuous, and dangerous as some young warrior on the war-path. "Well, did you enjoy yourself?" she demanded of Paul who had brought her home so placidly, and now stood by their hearth seemingly indifferent to her loveliness.

"Not particularly," her young husband replied.

"Oh what a wet blanket you are!" Prudence groaned, and threw up her ardent white arms despairingly.

"It is not the sort of thing I rave about, as you



know," Paul remonstrated. "You are lucky to get such bliss out of it."

"Bliss!" her low voice scorned the word. She sat hunched up on the firestool, her little pale face supported by her hands. Her fingers, like angry wings, beat a tattoo upon her cheeks. Her black hair and black dress struck no grave or melancholy note; they caught animation from her alert tenseness and there was a sparkling lightness about her as though her darkness was carved from jet.

Paul, lounging on an easy chair with one long leg flung over its arm, regarded his wife much as a big dog eyes the kitchen cat whom domestic law forbids him to encounter in fair fight. "It is getting late and I've got to be up early, you know," he gently suggested.

"It is all hopeless," Prudence groaned irrelevantly. "We never like the same things." They had been married four years and she was twenty-three. Graham reluctantly settled down to an argument. "Tonight's show did not give you and me the same thing," he announced. "Warwick took you in to dinner and you like him. I was sent in with Mrs. Foster."

"Don't you like her?" queried Prudence.

"I don't mind her. I expect she is very nice," he replied simply. "But I never know what to talk to a woman about."

She looked at him critically. The slow movements of his strong fingers filling his pipe vaguely pleased her: Paul did things accurately and was never slapdash. But his quiet face did not promise emotional entertainment.

"What did you talk about?" she enquired.

"I asked her how she liked Peshawar, and where she was going next hot weather. That sort of stuff.

She said she adored this place, and that was *that*. When I said, 'Where are you going next hot weather?' she replied 'Home.' There you are, no more to be said. I had to think of something else."

"Why did you not leave it to her to start a subject?" Prudence asked; she followed with a disconcerted curiosity this account of her husband's conversation.

"Well, I suppose she expected me to entertain her," he answered. Social training of pre-war days had evidently imbued this man with a sense of courteous obligation to the lady on his right.

"And did you?" asked Prudence bitterly.

"Probably not," Paul admitted, and gave a rueful chuckle. "But she wasn't much help. Then I had to ask all the women at dinner for a dance each. Eight of them. We talked about all that sort of thing: gardens and golf. Mrs. Willes was keen on her garden; she knows a lot about roses—I don't though. Still, I got on very well with her. And Mrs. Molesworth was amusing, but she is no chicken and fancies herself."

"She has beautiful clothes!" sighed Prudence.

"I hit it off best with Mrs. Murphy," pursued her husband. "Murphy is a good fellow. She was telling me about a row he had with a man on the staff in Egypt. She is not very discreet, I imagine. Well, there you are. That was my evening. It was all right, I suppose, but you can't call it wildly exciting."

"No. No, I should *not* call that wildly exciting," Prudence muttered, attacking the carpet furiously with an impatient foot. Then she looked straight at the man and demanded, "Paul, don't you care in the least, now, whether you are attractive to women or not?"

He flushed. "I don't want to make myself objectionable to them. But—good Lord!—can you conceive the kind of fool who says, or does, a thing and thinks to himself 'is that attractive?'"

"I don't mean that," she said quickly. "I mean something instinctive." She knew by his face that his sense of humour with infinite pleasure was beginning to form some heart-whole jest. She closed this line of escape by a question uttered without tenderness: "Does it never strike you that women want to be made love to?"

For the first time Graham was distinctly hostile. "Some women, yes," he said curtly. "Mrs. Foster and the others did not exactly convey that impression to me to-night, I must say."

She would not heed the check. "Oh, you weren't in luck? But I'm not surprised," she retorted.

He began to fume inwardly: she was rude, and she jarred. He maintained a very masculine and eloquent silence.

The dangerous young woman would not take the hint and go away quietly and sleep the sleep of an innocence that, as yet, was hers. The scene began. "Would it surprise you very much, Paul, if I told you that wherever I go—dinners, dances, everywhere—your sex makes love to me?"

He removed his pipe from his mouth and answered deliberately. "Surprise me? Yes, very much."

"Why? Because you don't think me attractive?" The vanity of this vivid creature was truly appalling.

"If you are fishing for compliments," said Paul, "you've got a queer way of setting about it. Nothing doing at the moment."

"I suppose you consider me tactless to tell you," Prudence murmured, "but it's the truth."

He got up and knocked the ashes out of his pipe

into the grate. She had completely spoilt his quiet smoke and he resented this. "Not the whole truth and nothing but the truth, eh?" he suggested quite good-humouredly. "Some men make love to every woman they see. Nothing serious, and if you want to stop 'em it is not difficult, I imagine. Not much in that. Dozens of men in Peshawar dine and dance with other men's wives and don't make love to them. Don't want to, or—anyhow they don't."

Her triumphant air of utterly enslaving all the companionable manhood that he knew so well greatly exasperated him. Yet he looked at her potent and reckless beauty with apprehension. Queer powers; her magics and her spells.

"Do you suppose I *imagine* that men make love to me?" Prudence demanded. "If you don't believe me it is your own look out."

"I merely suggested that there are many perfectly straight men who wouldn't. At any rate not under ordinary circumstances," Paul affirmed. Then he inquired, "Is anyone annoying you? Do you want me to do anything?"

She asked him in what seemed a breathless hush of her creating, "Do you never fear a rival?"

He pondered over that, seriously enough. Once or twice he appeared about to speak and to change his mind. At last he jerked out, "I don't want to be unnecessarily offensive."

"Say anything you like," she urged, but with a threatening air.

"Well," he began deliberately and gently, "I think a rich man might upset you."

"You mean Ronny Warwick?" she flashed.

"I suppose it would be that kind of fellow," he replied with reluctance.

"Of course he *wants* to make love to me," she

arrogantly admitted. "But I only regard him as a friend."

"Right-oh," said Paul.

Prudence rose and fretted about the room for a moment, then she demanded, "What do you mean by 'upset me'?"

"Excite you, rattle you," he groped slowly for the explanation she required. "You rather lose your balance when you are with people who can throw money about. It is to their advantage to get all the fun they can for it, but the best thing we can do for ourselves at present is to keep out of debt. That is more important for us than keeping up with them. We can't do what they do, so what is the use of trying?" His honest young face looked anxious. "We ought to lie low."

Prudence felt that a climax was reached. Here was this man whose standard was self-denial, and here within her breast was an intensity of desire that fought against repression. She broke out, speaking rapidly: "That's just it, Paul,—you *can't* be rich. It is not your fault: an officer is not able to make money. You can barely keep your head above water. It is not fair: it is a frightful handicap to you. As for me, Paul, I *might* be rich!" She paused, eager and dangerous.

"You could be rich? How?" he demanded, very intent now.

She gesticulated as she replied, her white arms beating the air rapidly, or hand meeting hand only to dart apart again—a battle of gesture to reinforce her war of words: "By getting a move on. Paul, we were *idiots* to suppose we could afford to marry. I'm as much to blame as you. Oh, I'm not sorry about it. It has all been experience, my dear. We live and learn. But I can recognise a mistake, and

I'm not content to sit down and moan. With me it is kill or cure, you know. I expect you condemn our marriage as much as I do—or more for all I know. Only, being the man, you don't like to tell me so. But now I've put the thing into words. I am for ending it all before it is too late."

Graham was alarmed and bewildered, but he showed nothing save his stolidity as he remarked, "I don't see what you are driving at. End *what*? And how do you mean to get rich?"

"End our living together here in Peshawar. Not a divorce. I can't divorce you, and you can't divorce me, without a reason,—and there isn't a reason. I want a separation: just an agreement, or a legal one. Whichever you like." Her youthful ardent voice pleading so emphatically was drowned by his loud and indignant interruption.

"Bunkum. If you're keeping us both up all night long in order to suggest two establishments as a form of economy you are wasting our time for nothing. I don't know what you are hinting at, about 'before it is too late.' As far as I'm concerned it was too late to talk of a separation directly we were married. The thing's done. I was a poor man then and you knew it. After all it is not such a bad show. There are many worse bungalows than this." He looked round the room with the rather pathetic expression of one who was hurt by a homethrust.

Prudence said with a low-voiced rapid utterance: "You know we ought not to have children. If we suddenly found one was coming it would be too late. I live in terror of it. No, we had far better separate now. You go your way and I'll go mine. I'm not a fool—I know a man thinks he can't live alone, so if you ever felt you wanted to marry someone else I'd help you to fix it up. I shall earn my own living.

I can act, and I've got looks. Or there is the cinema. I have always photographed well ; I have that sort of face. Anyhow, it would not be your responsibility. If I fail, I fail. But it would be up to me to succeed."

It came to Paul Graham then, that strange sense of sanctuary violated which wounds all the mysteries of personality, things undefined and never expressed ; a consciousness that honour and love are unconquerable dreams. The whole of his emotional life received a shock. He was so outraged that he found no argument which, if it carried conviction to Prudence, could also carry them back to a pride in each other. So he merely investigated the ruins she had made and shouted out to her, "I see. You regard me as an income, not as a husband !"

"I don't know what you mean," she declared in a tone provokingly reasonable and calm. She was rather frightened.

"Too small an income for what you want ; yes, I'm that. But I am life-size as a husband. I've not shrunk since you married me, and you've had the whole of me. Could any man have been more in love than I ?" He knew that he had given this girl the very best that existed in him, that he was no inadequate puppet.

"Yes, at first," she saw her advantage and took it quickly. The young wife used her experience as a bride to prove a change for the worse. "Those raptures don't last. We are not getting on well together now. It is the future I am thinking of. Paul, be reasonable. We have had our good times together and can part friends. People don't spoil their lives nowadays by going on with a thing when they see it won't work. They are not such fools. Your mother and mine would have had to stick to

it, but I am not obliged to do so and I won't. I give you fair warning, I will not."

"Who is the other man?" Paul asked in a strangled voice.

Prudence stamped her foot. "Why should there be another man? Why be insulting when you *know* there is not another man? It is not a different husband that I want, but a different life."

"You took to this life like a duck to water," he protested.

"Yes, because I'd had such a dull one before. Now I see that we shall develop into middle-aged failures, always poor and ultimately careworn. And it is avoidable if we have the pluck and initiative to avoid it. Without bills and debts you could go to the Staff College and make a brilliant career for yourself. Now you have me like a stone round your neck. I can't face it, Paul, I *can't*. The unending stagnation of economy—doing without. As your wife all I can *do* is to curtail expenditure. I want a life where I'm free to work, free to try my own luck, free to have babies if I want them." She spoke as proudly as though she proposed, a gallant pilgrim, to struggle on from strength to strength.

Her husband had pulled himself together. Here was a thing to face like mutiny in a regiment, like civil war in a kingdom. It was disintegrating; a tragedy. But one side, or other, losing much, would hold the final victory. He must set out to win. "Look here, Prudence," he said gravely, "you have sprung this thing on me. I thought you cared for me, you know. And I thought you regarded marriage as a bargain made for richer or poorer and all that, as I do. You do not, so we disagree. You think you have only got to turn your back on me and show that face of yours in the right quarter to make an



income, or acquire a share in some rich man's income. Good Lord ! It is the idea of an adventuress, and you are not cut out for that. You say I am insulting—why, I'm your husband, I *respect* you. You think you know all about life, yet you've always been sheltered. You only know things second-hand ; from talk, or novels. Wait till you experience real rough handling. Do you suppose I'm going to see you repudiate our marriage as though I'd been merely your jolly ass of a lover ? ”

But Prudence caught at that word ‘adventuress.’ A new and exciting rank, with all its opportunities, had been bestowed upon her. She locked her hands behind her little head and said exultingly, “How do you know that I am not an adventuress by temperament ? I certainly am not a stick-in-the-mud.” Then she softened and looked at him wistfully. “You never try to *realise* me, except in moments of ardent passion. The rest of the time you don't consider me and think : here is Prudence Graham, nearly twenty-four, having a good many personal qualifications which might with luck command success, but condemned to live within the sphere of another person's limitations, and to grow old un-beautifully and feebly as the frustrated do, to be without means to any end she may purpose or desire. That is my fate, unless I break free from you now, while I am young.”

He sat there stubborn and miserable. “What would you do to-morrow, if I agreed to-night ? What is your definite plan ? ” he demanded.

The woman improvised quickly. “I should see how I could borrow capital. Not much. I'd open an hotel somewhere out here on quite new lines. I should soon make money. Then, with enough at the bank to give me a certain independence for a

while, I should go to London and find a career for myself. On the stage probably."

Paul remorsefully scoffed: "No one who was not in love with you would lend you money for a wild-cat scheme like that. You would have to build your precious hotel. I'd like to see you run it—you, who always say you detest housekeeping and Indian servants. When the first person complained about anything you'd explode."

Her energetic voice interrupted him as she cried—"Oh yes, of course it is quite impossible for me to do anything, isn't it? And of course it is silly of me to attempt it, isn't it? But if you died of cholera tomorrow I should not be changed, should I? And I would possess at most one hundred pounds a year pension. It would be necessary for me to do something then, and everyone would expect me to support myself. If I became a widow at fifty my pension would be even more absurd. And I'd be untrained, incompetent. You take it for granted that I must sit down and contemplate all those terrors. I'm not to lift a finger to avert them. Why?" When he said nothing, but stared at her miserably, she repeated, triumphantly, "Why?" When he still was silent she added, "Because it suits you best that I should."

Paul winced. "It does not suit me." He denied it emphatically. "I often lie awake and sweat to think of what would happen if I died and you were left in such poverty. But I shan't worry so much now, because I can see that you would not care two straws and would marry a rich man as soon as you met one. Then you'd make yourself miserable because his money was not your very own money. You are mad on independence. No one is independent—there's a community of . . . of . . . spirit. We

never stand alone really. We spring from a union and we aren't full stature till we form a union. That's life, and it's not always pleasant. We can inherit some rotten things in our temperaments and in our persons, and when we marry we take on certain established conditions: responsibilities and duties. That's how I look at marriage. It is a serious contract. I'm honour bound. There *is* the spirit of the thing—its ideals and emotions; but there is the letter of the law as well. We are organisers, and the whole show has gradually become a system: justice and property and children require people to have a legal plan. You simply refuse to co-operate. You want special privileges to act as you please."

"I won't be governed by dead men's laws!" declared Prudence.

"I'm no dead man—the law still exists in me," retorted Paul. He glared at her. "I don't agree to a separation," he said.

"How are you going to prevent me if I choose to depart?" his wife challenged.

"Perhaps I can't prevent you," the man answered heavily. "You asked me to agree. I refuse."

The electric light went out. Instantly those two young people were blinded; were unable to see the anger, eagerness, and uncertainty in the other's face. Moving through the dark to a box of matches which Paul had dropped on the sofa they stumbled together, and the girl—impelled by some swift emotion—put a healing and experimental hand upon his shoulder. Uncritical forces in Graham quickened at the touch of this exasperating creature. He caught her close to him, held her and kissed her—rapidly, fiercely. And Prudence was unresisting; passive, but not hostile. There had been many of these moments in their married life, intense, beautiful.

"What rot you've talked," Paul said hoarsely. The light sprang upon them then to disclose her little face soothed, weary, but instantly watchful. "Paul," she cried aghast, "there are tears in your eyes!"

He did not answer her, but went into his dressing-room and crashed the door behind him.

We whom the world loved well  
Laying silver and gold on us,  
The kingdom of death and of hell  
Riseth up to take hold on us ;  
Our gold is turned to a token  
Our staff to a rod ;  
Yet shalt Thou bind them up that were broken  
O Lord our God.

SWINBURNE.

THE human mind is in one respect inferior to a gramophone : it cannot retain and repeat with any verbal accuracy a long conversation. During the ten days after her excursion into Afghanistan, Prudence, when reciting the arguments by which she had sought to prove her case for a separation, greatly improved upon them. She felt that she had been unanswerable. While she combed and brushed her abundant hair in front of the glass the pale oval of her face with its exquisite mouth and alluring eyes illustrated the recent contest for her. Paul surely must have *seen* how right she was when she had laid claim to those qualifications which should ensure her success. They obliterated for her those perturbing unshed tears of which she had been the cause. When morning broke like the flash of steel upon Peshawar and she had gathered in her golden wealth of chrysanthemums, she touched their loveliness with a whetted craving for all that is beautiful and abundant. She desired material to realise her hourly dreams of colour and form : pearls, and the suppleness and gloss and hue of rich fabrics, choice fruit and flowers. Martial

music vibrating through cantonments set her imagination to work constructing orchestra and audience and a curtain that rose to reveal herself. She ardently desired the vivacity of wealth, the zest of endeavour. Retrenchment, restraint, unemployment of her restless capacities, galled her as they galled nations and peoples in 1922. She was not unappreciative of all that Peshawar made her realise : the fierce picturesqueness of the city, the powerful manhood in cantonments, the mental vision of rulers which out-distanced the flight of bullets. The character and action that she saw acted as a spur to her own energies. Prudence disliked what she recognised as trivial, or base : to fill her life with the exhausting fever of amorous intrigue had not sufficient lure for her temperament. But mere restrictions failed to intimidate her—warnings not to make a scandal, not to make a mistake, were unheeded injunctions if they sought to obstruct her right of way to her desired goal. She was an indication of the ambition and egotism and ruthlessness invoked by war in great masses of the people. Being herself of a more intense vitality than the average individual, she showed more definite signs of the universal changes wrought by a triumphant fear over moral courage. Prudence could not aspire greatly ; she merely conspired vigorously for material gain. Paul, her husband, stood in her path. If he would not aid her to attain the financial safety and pleasure that she sought from life she must break up their home, their union. And, naturally, she required allies and supporters. She set out, impulsively because she was young, and diligently because she was in earnest, to make them.

On the last day of November she repeated those domestic acts, with their accompaniment of visualised desire, that were habitual to her. When the last

armful of copper-coloured blossoms was arranged in a great brass bowl Prudence saw beauty wrenched from her hands, which now reluctantly took up the task of mending stockings with ladders, gloves that lacked buttons, Paul's vests that must be patched. With a rebellious mind she worked for two hours while the strong eastern light glittered on the verandah and motors passed to and fro on the long Mall and her own life seemed to stand still. Then Paul returned to lunch. A Paul who made himself pleasant in a formal way. He had never been at ease with her since that scene which he ignored, but seldom forgot. Prudence perceived that he had decided that to quarrel would be injudicious, that wisdom required him to pacify her. So far as amiability went she responded with alacrity. If he proved an irreconcilable adversary she would have to lower her standard. But if Paul, with his strong personality, his unexpected sayings and doings, his quaint way of putting things, would eventually see her point, see how right she was, she could set forth alone with her flag flying. She desired to assume the rôle of a conscientious objector to her own marriage.

Graham, in the course of conversation, shattered those hopes. "The Colonel is in rather a state of mind this morning," he announced. "You don't know a Major in the S. & T. called Smith, do you? A quiet sort of man, tall, with reddish hair. Well, he has run away with Molly's governess." Molly was Colonel Best's little daughter.

"What on earth for?" cried Prudence in astonishment. She mentally reviewed the somewhat unenterprising appearance of the young governess.

"The usual reasons, I suppose," said Paul with an air of impersonal interest. "He wrote to the Colonel,

'I shall make her my wife as soon as the law permits. To all intents and purposes she *is* my wife.' Smith has three months' leave and has taken her home. The Colonel is very fed up with Mrs. Best for not seeing what the girl was doing. She had packed her things and off they went by the night mail yesterday. A liberal education for small Molly. I never liked that woman."

"So there is a Mrs. Smith already?" said Prudence warily.

"Who has been at Bournemouth for the last two years while Smith has had to live alone," said Paul indignantly. "She has only herself to thank for this."

Prudence looked across the table at Paul and recognised a formidable element in him. A teasing sunbeam was dancing about his face and shoulders, illuminating the scars of war and time, the close-cropped hair, the square jaw, the humorous screwed-up eyes.

"You think a man can't live alone?" she said tentatively.

"On the contrary: very pleasantly, most entertaining," he retorted in a quaint voice.

"Oh you know what I mean," remonstrated the girl.

"But not profitably," Paul concluded, and could not be induced to continue the conversation.

Impulsively Prudence abandoned as hopeless the idea of a separation. She would have a divorce. "It is a simple matter, nowadays," she told herself.

Paul went off to the range. His departure seemed to empty the house. The cocker spaniel went with him, and the dignified Sikh orderly disappeared. The servants withdrew to their quarters. In the



stillness Prudence made an agitation as she ransacked her wardrobe for something to wear. She asked herself bitterly whether it was sane to expect a woman to perpetuate the ordeal of an existence in which there was nothing that gave her content. Prudence dramatised the situation in her imagination as the effort of a gallant young woman, whose face was a persuasion and whose will was a law, to obtain liberty and superiority. And in contrast to the unexpected enterprise of Molly's governess, Mrs. Graham saw herself wrenching her freedom from a husband to whom the ordinary woman would have clung, inert and fond. Finally, the fact that Ronald Warwick, who in a sense, so Prudence thought, had the world at his feet, was bringing his motor round to take her to a tennis party at Government House proved her social value in a highly satisfactory manner.

"Heard about Smith?" enquired Warwick, when she was seated beside him.

"I think it is all rather horrid," said illogical Prudence with sincere distaste.

"Oh well, it amuses them, I suppose," her companion remarked contemptuously.

Prudence brushed the distressing business aside. "I have talked to Paul about a separation, Ronny," she said in her fresh young voice. "He won't hear of it."

Warwick shot a sidelong glance at her. "Naturally," he remarked.

She accepted this as tribute. "From his point of view, yes," she admitted. "I suppose a legal separation simply amounts to a sentence of solitary confinement. I don't want to be mean and begrudge Paul his full liberty since I'm determined to have mine. So I shall overcome my prejudices and decide

on a divorce as the solution. I suppose it is stupid and old-fashioned to mind."

"And does Paul prefer the idea of a divorce?" Warwick asked in a strained voice.

"I think he will be dreadfully difficult about it," said Paul's wife.

An awkward silence fell between the pair. Prudence looked round at Ronald Warwick to be confronted by his changed colour, his intense self-consciousness, his carefully averted eyes. "Well, you might show some interest!" she exclaimed in irritable astonishment.

"Perhaps I'm afraid of showing too much, my dear," Warwick said. His air of fastidious worldly wisdom invariably impressed Prudence, but she refused to be subdued by it now.

"Why go to either extreme?" she retorted loftily.

"Because you force me to become an extremist. You are a born agitator," Warwick replied with a wry smile.

Whereupon Prudence ignored his presence. She possessed the power of excluding a companion from intercourse to his discomfort. Away swooped her thoughts to the stern cantonment which appeared to keep the secrets of human beings under lock and key. Had hearts in exile a love of mystery, or a need of it? Their enthusiasms were rarely manifested, their faith not often declared: humility was hidden, sorrow concealed. But all those attributes which enhance dignity were demonstrated: discipline, authority, strong fellowship, vigilance, order, high purpose. It was as though they for ever spoke with the enemy at the gate.

The motor swung past the guard of Indian soldiers at the gate of Government House. Spacious lawns

and scarlet pointsettias, like courts and brilliant courtiers, made a vivid scene. Armed orderlies, gorgeous with gold braid, sat about the entrance to the great house. Tea and tennis was the innocent occupation that so much force protected. Towards the crowd gathered near the nets Prudence and Ronald Warwick made their way on foot with the girl leading.

Prudence imposed herself upon a small assembly because, while others were willing to subordinate themselves to the whole, she was not. The Chief Commissioner, Sir Edward Lyon, a widower of forty-eight with the mind of a scholar and the face of a respectable grocer, provided the afternoon's entertainment, and was prepared to endure with resignation the presence of many who were foreigners to every responsibility, power, and thought which animated his existence. He administered weak coffee to the civil surgeon's wife as conscientiously and courteously as he administered the turbulent affairs of the North-West Frontier Province. The General was animated by a keen desire to contest victory with Captain Brown, reputed a first class player. James, the Colonel Commandant, sought to commit to memory the names of various ladies recently arrived in Peshawar, and the wife of a Political Officer was engaged in discreetly imparting to him this not strictly confidential information. For the rest they either played tennis with concentration, or made themselves vaguely pleasant. To pass the time sociably and avoid any awkward moment was their candid intention, like excursion steamers seeking a calm sea.

Not so Prudence. She was there to enjoy herself. She did not wish to play tennis, and said so: she wanted not less than two lumps of sugar in her tea

and pink cake with cream inside, and refused all other nourishment; she desired to talk to Dick Davis, and annexed him, though he was required to make up a four. "Let's walk about over there," she said, and promenaded up and down with him beyond the tennis courts, gaily choosing to be conspicuous.

"Heard about old Major Smith?" asked Dick at once.

"Yes, my child," said young Prudence, "and I don't see why he and Miss What's-her-name shouldn't run away together if it amuses them."

"Well, I disapprove," said Dick.

"Why?" demanded Prudence. "It is not your affair, is it? They can't expect wedding presents."

"When I get married," Dick began solemnly, "I want to feel that I'm settled and not just running about. I'm for the Darby and Joan business."

"If you didn't get on with your Joan you'd soon sing a different tune," observed Prudence.

"Not I. I'd stick it out. For the duration of the war, you know. A bargain is a bargain. Why have an institution like marriage if you don't regard the making of a family as a serious job?"

"It is very easy to talk like that when you aren't married," said Prudence crushingly.

"Oh, I'll be married one of these days," Dick said with a chuckle. "When some *really* nice girl is kind enough to say 'Yes.' I don't mind if she is beautiful or not: I think a beautiful wife would be rather too much of a good thing for me. I'd like her to have an attractive face of course. If she had money of her own so much the better. But what I want is a jolly good companion. And I'd hate a hard-hearted woman."

"There are dozens and dozens of girls such as your ideal," said Prudence without enthusiasm.

"One will be enough for me," said Dick.

How provokingly conservative even young men were, Prudence exclaimed to herself; and to her escort she announced, "I am thinking of being divorced, Dick."

"Not serious, are you?" he asked after a moment's silence.

The girl's strange little face tilted up to the sky was certainly serious. "Absolutely," she replied.

His friendliness vanished. It withdrew itself from his frank eyes and simple manner and pleasant voice. "I'd have no sympathy with Paul's divorced wife. Paul is one of the very best."

At that Prudence turned on her heel. "It is confidential, of course," she said curtly.

"Of course," Davis agreed.

Prudence set off with speed to seek Thomas Trench, who had finished his game. Mrs. Molesworth, anticipating his instant desertion from her side, put in a pinprick, "I see you have accepted the moral support of a skirt this afternoon, Mrs. Graham," she cried.

The girl nodded. "Every contribution to the morals of Peshawar is thankfully received no doubt after the Smith scandal," she shot a swift glance at Trench who looked officially grave. She sat down beside him and said in a low voice: "I suppose Mrs. Smith will divorce her husband? Tell me, don't *you* think a man should always allow his wife to divorce him if they cannot get on together? Legal separations are so old-fashioned and absurd."

The General appeared to consider the problem with an air half indulgent, half impartial. "Can one lay

down a hard-and-fast rule? If the husband is hard and the wife is fast it is natural that he should let the law take its course, I think. But if he is a soft-hearted man and had cared for his wife I suppose he might—he probably would nowadays—shield her by taking steps to enable her to divorce him. No woman could demand it as a right. That's ridiculous, of course."

Prudence frowned. "As divorce is the only way of dissolving a marriage, and divorce is not granted except for one thing, surely a man ought to be willing to furnish the necessary evidence? Why should the wretched woman have to live with him when it makes her miserable, and why should she be forced to disgrace herself when her only fault is that she has made a mistake? If I were a man, and cared for a woman, I would give her the one thing she asked for—her liberty."

"Would you, I wonder?" said Trench, smiling at her. "Well, a man's a selfish creature as a rule. He might prefer that form of scandal to the other, but then again he might *not*. He certainly is under no obligation to put himself in the wrong. I know a man who shielded his unfaithful wife in that way and eventually fell in love with a girl and married her. A very nice girl, she was; I'm godfather to their baby. He told me he regretted for the child's sake and his second wife's sake that he had not let the blame rest where it belonged. Explanations are a great bore and so the verdict of the courts has the last word as a rule, in spite of the well-known perjury which exists."

Prudence fidgeted. "I should not have thought that it would have mattered two pins to his second wife and child," she said. Then she looked at Trench for confirmation and noticed that he seemed uncon-

vinced. "It is enough to make people wicked—refusing them release except for a sin," she added sharply.

The General laughed at her in a teasing way. "If you insist on your liberty at all cost you must be prepared to pay the market price. Does the motive for your 'sin' matter to the law? Not one whit. Passion, or merely—er—an episode according to a solicitor's programme; so long as sufficient cause for a divorce is established, it is all the same to judge and jury, isn't it? You can't be forced to 'sin.' You choose it yourself deliberately as the lesser evil in your own eyes."

Prudence broke in upon his lazy drawl. "But the whole thing is unfair. It is almost impossible for a woman to furnish evidence that will make her husband divorce her unless she really has a lover—isn't it? And, besides not *wanting* a lover, there is a black mark against her, though of course the world is getting more broad-minded every day. Now a *man* can manage all that quite easily, and no one is any the worse. Why should he and his wife have to waste all the best years of their lives perpetuating a mistake?" Her whole lithe form was tense with mental and emotional energy as she spoke. Trench, watching the strange play of expression on her vivid face, was anxious.

He said persuasively: "Men sometimes break up their homes themselves, but they hate to have the smashing done by anyone else. I don't know, but I'm pretty sure that I would not have lent myself to any suggestion of enabling a wife to divorce me because she desired her freedom. I believe American men look at the thing differently from Englishmen. Speaking for myself—no, I'd refuse. Unless I disliked the woman. Then you have another problem

altogether. And marriage matters to the State : once you take up its responsibilities and obligations you can't regard the affair as concerning your own private happiness exclusively, I think. Divorce—any scandal—affects some men in their professional lives, too. And there are children to consider." His eyes sought out Warwick and he added : " Take your friend Warwick—he could afford that sort of thing financially : not any other way. He hasn't the strong stuff in him. He'd make a habit of it or a grievance." Trench pointed with the handle of his racquet at Dick, who was returning a difficult service with skill. " Now young Davis there has neither the money nor the temperament for the divorce court, but a woman might stake all she possessed on him and he'd see her through to the very end of time. It might handicap his career, but he'd run straight afterwards." He dug the end of the handle into the grass between his feet and hung his head a while, his eyes on the ground. Then he asked in a low voice, " So you think these are the best years of your life ? "

Prudence, with her elbows propped up on her knees and the pale oval of her face gathered into the caressing palms of her hands, murmured, " They ought to be. I'm young now."

" I wonder," rejoined Trench. " I am happier to-day than I was at your age. Memory is a fine companion. Disillusion is less wounding than continual disappointments. Love with me was a turbulent business. Perhaps love is a misnomer. People had control over me and I had not acquired self-control. That makes for discontent. There were splendid intervals of course ; a young Englishman is a happy beggar. But I have wider impersonal interests now, and Life is a greater friend."



"You are a man," sighed Prudence. "At your age I shall be a back number. Perhaps people will say, 'She must have been pretty when she was young.'"

He gave a whimsical smile. "You flatter us. Why should the abatement of our admiration make life so grey to middle-aged women? They don't require it. They are mature then and therefore it is personality which counts. Their character is of immense interest, and makes association with them valuable to a middle-aged man. ~~But an elderly woman is deadly dull when she lacks character.~~"

"That is all very fine," remonstrated Prudence, "but plain clever women don't seem to have a good time."

"I didn't say anything about clever women, did I," retorted Trench. "I spoke of character."

"Goodness," mused she in a tone that pronounced it dull.

"Not precisely." His voice implied that she was slow to understand. "Their quality; the thing that their personality ranks by."

"Yes, I see," said young Prudence quickly. She was not passing unscathed through the hours of that afternoon in Peshawar. Dick Davis had ranged himself on Paul's side, the General had not subscribed to her theories, and Ronald Warwick had beaten a retreat at the vision of an unwedded Prudence Graham. Inwardly she raged at the thwarting of her self-will. She thought what a frail weapon her beauty was when it encountered Warwick's selfishness, Dick's principles, and the General's code. Of the three men Warwick counted the cost to himself of the thing he desired, Dick liked Paul better than Paul's wife, and Trench put many considerations into the scales to weigh against the attractions of one woman

They resisted her: for all they cared she might dwindle into an impoverished middle age, insignificant and defeated.

Davis came towards them at a signal from Trench. "Tell Warwick that we are carrying Mrs. Graham off to see my wife," said the General calmly.

Prudence fell in with this suggestion very readily, and made an effective exit from Government House in the great grey motor. "'Prudence!' She is not in the least like her name," Mrs. Molesworth exclaimed to the Chief Commissioner, as she watched her depart.

Sir Edward Lyon's precise voice answered her dryly: "Mrs. Graham feels herself to be of interest. One cannot be surprised, for dramatists and novelists are busy depicting the new social problems which she and her type present. The public attention concentrated on young women is out of all proportion to their contribution to civilisation's development of course. But the law itself betrays consciousness of their challenge, and the churches show a rather futile anxiety. It will be hard for such a generation to pass into the obscurity of a sensation which has ceased to excite feeling."

"I suppose it is their turn," murmured Mrs. Molesworth. "For four years of war you men held the world as audience while you killed each other. That was a life and death struggle. Now women are presenting a love or passion combat." She gave a well-pleased laugh. The widower dryly responded, "The institution of marriage is your concern, and you should be trained for it as a bomber was trained, or a machine gun section. Discipline, and the experiences of those who know, should school you. It made specialists of the mothers and grandmothers of our class. Mrs. Graham and her contemporaries have nothing but

their own mob's self-will to match against man's shrewdness in law and madness in passion. Man has been expert enough to differentiate between his mistress and his wife, his heir and his other children. As far as I understand these young married women of to-day, they fail to discriminate between an experiment and an obligation."

"Yes," said Mrs. Molesworth very doubtfully; she hated an argument. "Their new wine has burst your old bottles, however."

Prudence had never been to Flagstaff House except to write her name in the visitor's book. She was not welcome to the hostess on this occasion though her reception lacked no outward signs of cordiality. Prudence's investigating eyes received impressions which created soaring ambitions. It was not the quality of Lady Trench's possessions, the valuable Persian rugs, expensive furniture, old and exquisite china that pricked Prudence: it was the wide field of interests indicated by the many rolls of periodicals and newspapers just arrived by the English mail; it was the big packet of letters which Lady Trench handed over to her husband, and the dozen envelopes that lay just opened on her writing-table. The photographs scattered about the room with well-known names scrawled across them made Prudence envious. And she noted how affectionately as well as deferentially Dick treated Lady Trench and the consideration shown to her by the General's manner. Prudence had seen herself as all-powerful with Trench and Davis. She had consigned Lady Trench to the shelf or to a merely official position; and here was this woman of forty rich in friends, and reigning in the domestic kingdom. She made Prudence feel crude, feel insignificant, in a way no man had ever succeeded in doing.

"If I arrived in England to-morrow I should know only half a dozen people in London, and not one of them *counts*," groaned the girl to herself; but with a certain hardy pluck she rattled on and displayed little proprietary airs when addressing her host. He adroitly counteracted her tactlessness by demonstrating a special interest in everything his wife said. Eleanor Trench perceived it all, and felt it all with that acute sensitiveness which was forever her hidden agony. Presently she inquired gravely of Prudence, "Was this Miss White, Mrs. Best's governess, a friend of yours by any chance?"

"No, I only set eyes on her twice," replied Prudence with some resentment.

"Poor Mrs. Best has been here this afternoon to see me, Tom," Lady Trench continued in her cool even voice. "She is very distressed, and wonders whether she was to blame at all in neglecting to see that Miss White had friends of her own age and sufficient healthy amusement. She fears the girl may have been very lonely. Perhaps we should have invited her here? It is so difficult to keep in touch with everyone."

"Dick, why didn't you ask her to dinner and put her beside me?" said the General. "Confound it all, Eleanor, what is an A.D.C. for if he cannot provide me with an enterprising companion occasionally? Besides, my influence might have rescued her. I'm safer than that fascinating fellow, Smith, what?"

"She was asked to tennis, sir, but she didn't come," replied Dick firmly.

"Tennis? Well, there you are; that ought to have done the trick. It would have if you had made yourself sufficiently agreeable. Proposed to her—why didn't you propose to her? She'd have accepted

you like a shot. Of course she would. An irresistible A.D.C. And you'd have done her good, Eleanor. Any amount of good. Between the three of us Smith wouldn't have had a look in. We'd have saved society. Well, she has turned her back on us, poor dear, and I hope she doesn't live to regret it. What are you laughing at, Mrs. Graham?" Trench laughed too.

"I think all the fuss is very funny," answered Prudence with a little superior air.

"I don't," said Dick, glaring at her. "I'm shocked."

"He's shocked, Eleanor," said the General. "And it takes a lot to shock Dick. There must have been something in that girl after all." Then he dropped his bantering tone and said in a growl of disgust: "I'm shocked, too. It's a nasty mess."

Lady Trench remarked quietly: "When one thinks of his poor wife tied to that paralysed boy of theirs at home, unable to join her husband; pinching and screwing and sacrificing herself—and now this sordid betrayal!"

Prudence fought for sufficient self-confidence to assert her own views on marriage in the presence of this quiet courteous woman, but her nerve failed her. She did not hold her own successfully in the conversation which followed: every topic seemed to disclose her lack of background, her poverty of tradition and achievement. And she was honest enough to acknowledge this to herself. When she took her departure Lady Trench bade her farewell very kindly, but before she was out of the door she heard Eleanor's voice exclaiming to the General, "Tom, I've had *such* an interesting letter from Lord Morland." A letter from the Chief of the Imperial General Staff at home immediately became the lodestar of Pru-

dence's ambition. No, a note: a note, with flowers.

Dick had been bidden to drive her to her bungalow in the motor and he was friendly in his jolly way, but Prudence tried to reinstate herself in his approval by soft little tricks that had more charm than argument. Dick found himself thinking of her very indulgently on his way back until his mind's eye suddenly disclosed Paul's face with its direct look, while he heard a story out; and its broad grin when he saw the whole point of it, missing nothing.

Prudence had a sense of space to turn in when she entered her home that evening. Other people's opinions could not crowd upon her here: her will had room in which to make its path. She had a longing, that had fierce elements of wildness in it, for self-expression in a life less dependent, less official, less advertised. After dinner she went to the mirror in her bedroom and looked at her earnest face reflected there, as if the dark beauty of it warranted the demands she was about to make upon the man in the drawing-room engaged in a perusal of cheerful *Punch*.

She joined him and, standing by the fire, watched him in amazement that he could again be so unconscious of her activity and threat. "Paul," she cried alarmingly.

He lifted his eyes, startled. "What's up now?" he asked.

"I made a mistake the other evening when I asked you to agree to a separation," she replied. "That is only a half-way house. What I want is a divorce."

Prudence saw his blood rush darkly to his face. "Is that a confession?" he demanded.

Her innocence answered him convincingly when she replied, "No. You can't divorce me."

"Then you are asking for the moon," he told her.

"I am not," she persisted steadily. "If you care for me at all you will prove it by an unselfish sacrifice, and permit me to divorce you." Flinching a little in view of what she read in his face, she explained in tones that were very soft: "We know that you have been true to me and that I have been faithful to you. We are straight people, you and I. But the law only permits one exit for marriage, and as the world forgives a man for an act that it criticises in a woman, and circumstances enable a man to arrange evidence which a woman cannot manufacture, I think it is up to a husband to take steps to permit his wife to divorce him."

To which statement Paul vouchsafed nothing but a muttered, "Oh, you do, do you?"

Prudence was exasperated and spoke swiftly. "Do you mean, to tell me that you think it honourable, or chivalrous, or just, to hold me bound to you all my life,—to be poor, to be unhappy, to be dependent, as the penalty for a mistake? I married you in all good faith, thinking it was for our happiness. I see now that I *cannot* be happy. What good shall I be to you if you clutch on to me against my will?"

"You are my wife," Paul pronounced in tones half bitter, half final.

"And what does that imply?" the girl questioned. "Does it mean you want my love? I've been impulsively responsive, Paul. But I don't care for you *enough*. Do you mean you want my body? I tell you I belong to myself."

He replied by another question, delivered heavily, "Do you realise what you are asking me to *do*? To go away and be unfaithful to you in some casual

manner with some woman I pay for. There you are, a sheltered woman who expects everyone to treat her with respect, and that is the sort of job you ask me to do for you ! ”

She moved uneasily. “ Not really. Only a pretence to satisfy the ridiculous laws you men have made. ”

“ Just mud for my name, then, ” Paul continued. “ And for some woman’s name. ”

Prudence interrupted, “ That sort of woman wouldn’t care. ”

“ And you’d take advantage of that ? ” he scoffed.

“ Yes, ” she cried. “ Because it is the only way left open to me. Better that way than to go on living with a man against my will. That’s immoral if you like ! ”

In the pause which followed she could not penetrate the darkness of his inscrutable silence. Upon his face had fallen an iron stillness ; and, dulling the magnificence of his hardy youth, there was an air of misery and resolve. In the depth of his troubled mind he was reviewing the high hopes and careful purpose of his boyhood : to get into Sandhurst, to win distinction there, to keep out of debt and yet hold his own in his British battalion. Then had come the strange challenge to character of his life with an Indian regiment. He had had to safeguard an honour definitely personal and yet mysteriously national. The name of the regiment in the war, and his own reputation, had been responsibilities that kept a man tense, made him terrible in battle and abounded in terrors for himself in rare moments of introspection. The whole thing had been a tough job and was still a giant’s unpopular task. And the outcome of it all was to be a disclosure of defeat and downfall in his private life as a man. A trusty and



well-beloved gentleman was to enter the divorce courts as a squalid lover. No: he would not have that record.

"No," he said to his wife. "No."

"Is that your last word?" she cried.

"Yes," he answered.

"You know what you are driving me to?" the woman questioned.

"If you would go to the devil, there is no reason why I should go to oblige you," Paul retorted.

Then she broke down, wringing her hands. "But you know I can't do it! And you need not do it really!" she sobbed. Her tears were not unshed as his had been. She let them come in anger, in mortification, in bitter discontent. She was an emotional force, and while she wept his silence was one of a humiliation beyond anything she could realise. He saw his marriage as a thing he defended: it stood for law, order, honour in his life. But the secret joy of his love, the hidden pride of his personal romance, were tortured through her sedition. As a man he could hardly hold up his head against the fact that this woman cried because he was her husband.

Prudence fled into her bedroom, and he sat on by the dying fire to the sound of her sobs. He wondered with a sort of horror if the Sikh orderly could hear her too. There she was, in their bedroom, a woman of his country, tradition and generation: a lady, and he held, inarticulate, a code of ceremonious conduct towards her as such. And she thrust him away from all chivalry, from all companionship of instinct and youth and mind, towards a life that went slinking through the night. A life that meant a short leave spent in Bombay or Calcutta: the train roaring as it carried him towards a city through desert and past solitary villages, the sinister journey of an exile.

Or a life that crept to his very door in the darkness, known to servile eyes, departing before daylight ; a night without romance. A life that Kashmir held out dangerously upon the face of her creeping rivers in little stealthy boats. A life that made the lines of tea gardens seethe till one woman slipped forth as chosen and the ripples of anticipation stilled behind her departed shadow. He remembered the remarkable evening when a major, since killed in France, had suddenly and unforgettably quoted Scripture to him in Quetta: "Solomon was no fool, young Graham, and he spoke from experience. He said he'd observed many a young fellow and how he 'went the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, in the dark and black night.' And this was what he'd seen come of the adventure—'many strong men have been slain by her.' And remember what he said, 'Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant ; but he knoweth not that the dead are there.' " The major had added, not without a furious compassion, of a subaltern who had shot himself, "Don't forget that poor devil Stone." He had never forgotten. He recalled it all vividly to mind while his young wife cried because the laws of marriage were strict and definite.

Between the darkness of passions rustling in the undergrowth of an Asiatic exile and the greyness of her tears' desolation Paul saw the clean steel of some valorous souls. A few in Gilgit, three weeks' march from a white woman. Some in the Khyber Pass and in all the mountain passes. Some, when the armed hosts camped in the wilderness and marshes of Mesopotamia. The ironsides of Great Britain, they were great sportsmen. He stood up and walked into his wife's bedroom, and she raised an accusing face from the pillow to greet him.

"Prudence, I swear I'll never ask you to give me your love again as it is against your will," he told her huskily.

She beat her little fists upon the bedclothes and addressed the heavens with upturned face. "I bet you—I bet you—that when I'm in my forties and you are in your fifties you'll fall in love with a girl of my age and expect me to sit and look on! That will be my reward for yielding my whole life to you now, with my eyes open, and knowing I'm a fool!"

He stuck to his decision against her falling tears even as he had stuck to his ground against the falling earth of trenches trembling and dissolving in the throes of some tremendous bombardment. Then he had thrown all his character into the fight, backing up his physical objection to defeat with his soul's resistance; now he withstood the attack on his nerves of her pleading voice when she asserted, "You are spoiling my chance of happiness."

"I promise you that it shall be all right for you in the end," he asserted.

"What do you call 'all right'?" murmured Prudence, exhausted.

"If you were in love with me it would be 'all right,'" Paul told her.

"But that's finished." Her weary whisper crept into silence.

During the night, as he lay wakeful within a yard of her, or snatched a fitful sleep from sullen hours, memory and dreams sent lights wheeling over this Londoner. Stars marched across the sky as he with the Army sailed West to war, over deadly seas. Camp fires glowed uncertainly for him, and lanterns flickered through dim compounds. And London lights went past him two by two, endless and friendly; while in the dark roadway between them other lights

manceuvred in pairs all on one level. Feverishly he clung to those signals of mystery, simplicity, and order ; and avoided alike the thought of the outer darkness of No Man's Land and the invasion of daylight which would disclose his wife's sleeping face to him in all its enmity and adventurous beauty.

Thy love is better than high birth to me,  
Richer than wealth. . . .

SHAKESPEARE.

"I HEAR Prudence Graham is going away to-night to some place with an unpronounceable name in the Salt Range," May Molesworth remarked to Lady Trench.

Eleanor, with a curious watchfulness in her manner as she awaited Prudence and the General who strolled about the garden together, replied, "Yes: it seems that she has a step-brother in the Indian Civil Service. A man called Fisher. He and his wife are at Chuha Saidan Shah. I should have thought she would have found it deadly dull even for ten days."

"She is beating a retreat, I imagine," said Mrs. Molesworth. "I hear Captain Graham hates going out at night and she hates going in. Probably they indulge in appalling rows."

"That never pays," said Eleanor quietly.

Trench and Prudence entered by the French window and the girl sat on the firestool, very silent and as though she were quite at home. During the last three weeks she had been almost daily at Flagstaff House.

"What will you do in the Salt Range?" Mrs. Molesworth enquired.

"Ah, that is what I want to know," said the General. "I believe she is playing some deep game."

"No, I'm just marking time," Prudence replied in a small cross voice.

"She is sulky about something," Trench declared, and at that her face broke into sudden and lovely mirth.

"Paul is thwarting me," she laughed. "I feel as though I were being held up by a policeman—so." She extended one arm. "While all my engines are running hard, like *that*." Her left fist pounded the cushion beside her.

"I am sure your Paul is right," said Mrs. Molesworth.

"Yes, you would be," retorted Prudence with a little sniff.

"There, there, don't be savage," Trench murmured in a caressing tone. "You are a born tyrant, you know; and I only hope your step-brother will avenge us all."

May caught a glimpse of Eleanor's face and thought, how old she looked. The lines around her mouth were bitterly accentuated, and as she bent her head to peer under the kettle while she manipulated the flame beneath it the worn contour of her jaw and throat showed harshly. Prudence leant forward to help her and every turn of her young neck and face was seductive with a smooth and supple grace. "Thank you, dear," said Eleanor coldly.

The girl stood up and made an abrupt departure. She walked alone through the clear brown outlines of the Mall as the sun went down. Her face, with frosty breath hovering over it like a veil, was an open rebellion, and her swift stride was eagerness itself, her thoughts were winged angers. Paul, Trench, and Warwick would miss her: there was no one who so stung them to emotion in Peshawar. It would serve them right, she exulted; they had not helped her.

Paul, having triumphantly refused her a divorce or separation, had been a man of moods during the last three weeks: sometimes he had been very kind to her, at intervals he had been masterful and quick-tempered. Prudence could not leave Peshawar station without his money in her pocket, and nowhere in the cantonment or city could she pick up gold and silver. Her carefully disguised advertisements in the *Pioneer* had been quite unproductive. A journey to the moon was as easy an excursion as a voyage to England unless Paul would pay for her passage. The economic situation closed tightly around her.

"If I had a lover whom I loved," thought Prudence, "he would run away with me, and after all the horrid fuss was over, I could begin life again." But for such a chance you could not plot and plan; sudden and mysterious attraction drew you and ardour kindled. "I may sit and twiddle my thumbs for months or years before I meet the man who loves me and for whom I could care enough," the girl admitted. She knew that she was incapable of a loveless elopement. She had fallen back upon the prosaic plan of persuading her step-brother to lend her money with which to return to England and seek for some post that would offer the chance of wealth and success. Prudence had not seen John Fisher for ten years and had never met his wife, so a renewal of relationships was necessary before she could broach the matter to him. She had proposed herself as a visitor and received a telegram which said, 'Come along. Delighted to see you again. Wonder what you are like nowadays. John.'

Prudence had not finished her packing when Paul thrust his head through the door. "May I come in? You need not start for half an hour." He came into the room and disgorged a pile of ten

rupee notes on to her dressing-table. "Will that be enough?" he asked awkwardly.

"Yes, thank you," said Prudence. Then she glanced at him. "Fever coming on?" she cried.

"I think so," he said, with patience.

She made an awkward gesture. "Then I can't go. I must stay and look after you."

"Nonsense," he answered. "What good could you do?"

Prudence stamped her foot. "Of course I could do you good. Naturally I will stay if you feel you are in for malaria again."

Paul gave a gentle chuckle. "You are a model wife, aren't you?"

"I see no point in being sarcastic and superior," the girl retorted. She hesitated, her eyes on his face which had grown haggard, and her travelling hat in her hand. "What shall I do?"

"Stick to your plan of course," said Paul.

"All right, then," said Prudence and put on her hat.

He went over to her and placed his hands on her shoulders. "Kiss me good-bye," he demanded resolutely.

With a half smothered laugh she yielded her lips. Yes, there was something about Paul—— Then, when he freed her she muttered, "We are a queer pair, I must say."

With her back to him she forced herself to remark nervously, "You think I am disgraceful to ask for a divorce, but if we happened to be Scotch we could obtain a decree for desertion. There *are* two opinions as to marriage being a life sentence, you know."

"I'm not Scotch, I'm a Londoner," said Paul.

She felt a sharp pang of compunction when the



night mail drew out of Peshawar station and Paul signalled her a farewell. He was certainly in for a return of malaria. Sher Khan, the bearer, knew the routine and the doctor would not spare himself in the effort to reduce Paul's temperature with all speed. Eventually he would sweat himself free of the poison and be weak but well again. She was not anxious, but neither was she unconcerned: there was a patience and endurance in his bearing while he felt the wretched misery coming on that forced her to respect the man. His plight haunted her as the train roared its way past Attock Fort, with a massive shadow banked against the sky and lights climbing and sparkling over wild hills. Prudence's eyes could just discern in the vast shadowland the deeper darkness of the gorge through which the river coiled and uncoiled its steel and onyx that rippled like chain armour on a serpent: and now and then the moonlight drifted upon barbed wire protecting the railway lines. The train ran out on to a great bridge and all the noises of the echoing nullah gathered into one weird orchestra of the night. Sparks from the engine floated out over the stony burial grounds of Mahomedan dead and were obliterated there, and Prudence, diving into her rugs and blankets, longed for a merrier music than the rattle of the carriage windows and a gayer picture than that of her husband shaking in the grip of ague. She turned and tossed irritably. "I wish I were good, or bad," she moaned.

Rawalpindi Station called to her with a confusion of speech out of the lamplit dawn. She could hear an Englishman talking to his wife, and the clipped syllables of a Eurasian guard, above the raucous chorus of male voices of Punjab folk, and later at little Mandra Junction she emerged from her dusty

carriage into the cold and shadeless January morning. The mail on its southward journey withdrew from her all companionship of her own race, and the hawk-like countenance of Shah Baz, her servant, was the only familiar thing she saw. Forlornly she bundled into the one first-class carriage in a little train that waited on a siding and presently pulled out of the station and began to crawl the eighty miles to Chakwal.

To right and left of her the solitary Punjabi farmer went about his business and once more she travelled through a land devoid of entertainment. Slow-moving cattle, isolated ryots, and zemindars gave the only signs of life. But the earth was gorgeous, dazzling; the Himalayas rose over the plain and climbed into the sky in great masses of dark purple crowned with snow. Murree was concealed behind a cloud, and the heights of Poonch State shone in a blaze of light, while beyond them the icy whiteness of the Pir Panjal range lifted itself into a supremacy of strength and beauty above Kashmir and India. Beneath this startling vision the plains spread brilliant mustard fields, minting gold for miles and miles. Pale thorn-trees softened harsh scars upon the dry land which was colourless as dust except where the young crops broke from it in vivid green towards the light. In the Khyber Pass Prudence Graham had been intensely aware of a military organisation and the absence of luxury and women; here she was confronted by the absence of artificialities, the invisibility of any social order, the silent and masterful achievements of seed and soil. Prudence felt that she must not delay to make friends with her step-brother and accomplish her purpose, for to linger long in this huge glittering grave of plains and mountains and unending sky was to be

buried alive. For over six hours the train ambled on and on, and at a wayside station called Dhudhial she noticed many Sikhs wearing the black puggaree of the Akalis and having daggers as long as dirks: they moved to and fro with a savage and menacing swagger that was childish in its crude wish to impress. Prudence was glad when the train went on, but there went with her that picture of arrogance and threat. The Himalayas were out of sight now and this was a land of dark hearts. She rejoiced when she reached Chakwal and Fisher, disentangling himself from the official company of the tehsildar and police inspector and the headmaster of the district board school, advanced to meet her.

Prudence was taken by surprise: she had not expected anyone so good-looking as he was. Never had she seen so handsome a man. He was as dark as herself, and his nose had a beauty of profile and detail that set him apart, she felt, from people with ordinary rough-and-ready noses. His fine mouth closed so firmly that it was a relief to observe that his eyes condescended to remain open; had they shut too you must have felt the man to be bolted and barred against you. His height, his proportions, his movements were all exactly right and had an uncanny grace and strength. And he was equipped with brains, and was set in authority. Prudence thought that this subdivision of the Jehlum district had revealed itself as a kingdom in which the ruler was anointed by nature above his fellows. His voice, when he greeted her, was perfectly in harmony with his appearance. She felt curiously put in the shade by John Fisher. After one glance of recognition he did not seem particularly interested to look at her again.

"Had something to eat? That's all right. And I see you are in riding kit. Your luggage will follow

on a camel." He led the way out of the station through the crowd that stared and salaamed. Two ponies were led up and he put his sister into the saddle and lengthened her stirrup leathers in a prompt and efficient way that definitely conveyed an intolerance for delay or incompetence. "It is about twenty miles," he told her as they mounted. They rode off into the plains, skirting the level and commonplace outline of the city of petty merchants. A clattering escort of local worthies followed them.

"I hardly remembered you at all, John," Prudence announced, forcing her existence upon his attention.

"I recollect you perfectly: the devil of a spitfire and very full of yourself," he replied with intimacy rather than affection.

"I'm that now," she said, amused.

"So much the worse for Paul," he remarked casually.

John Fisher turned in the saddle and carried on a conversation in a shout with some of the men who rode behind them. Prudence felt that to all intents and purposes she had been brushed off the face of the earth. The scene remained long in her memory—that sense of wayfaring which the saddle gives, the sounds of the cavalcade, the harsh give and take of the men's voices, the veil of dust and the blaze of sunshine, the rich and gallant fields, the knowledge that in all that dumb territory this little company of mounted men incarnated the pageantry of government and property, of authority, and the thrusting and contentious affairs of a people who in time of war had sent more recruits into the army than any other district in India. At a milestone she received a sharply defined picture of John Fisher with his back turned on the Awans and his face turned from the

little muffled figure of a woman hidden behind the thick white folds of an enveloping burkha, who rode a shuffling weak-kneed pony, while her skinny brown son sat behind her on the animal's quarters. Ahead of them the road abruptly climbed into the rugged desolation of the Salt Range. Always John Fisher seemed to keep his distance and to take the lead.

"Were you surprised when I suggested invading you like this?" she enquired as their horses settled down to a drowsy walk.

"Not particularly," he answered, and added: "You are very like our mother. To look at, I mean. And she was a sudden sort of creature. Used to swoop down on me at school without warning. Then she would omit to write a line for weeks at a time, while all the other little chaps were hearing regularly from their mamas."

"I don't remember her clearly. Were you very fond of her?" Prudence asked.

"Wildly; but she dropped one completely at times. You put my nose out of joint, so did your father. I disliked your father a good deal." Then he abandoned the subject and ignored her presence beside him while he pointed out to a submissive delinquent his omission to repair the road over which they travelled. When, later, he dismissed their escort, and accepted the proffered attendance of illaquadars and others who sat on horseback awaiting their approach, he did the thing well, made the departure and the advent a fitting event for the picturesque scene. As they swept on through the frowns of the fretful and distorted hills Prudence felt that the man of the moment was passing by, and that the villages and valleys were aware of it.

There was an eagerness about this step-brother of

hers: he pressed forward. Though he did not unduly hurry her, nor outpace the badly mounted men behind them, he no more loitered than does a man who rides a race for a wager. He appeared to be approaching something. Their tortuous and ascending road at last ran smoothly into a little fertile upland carpeted with irrigated fields. They clattered over a bridge where a broad and lustrous stream slumbered beneath the shadows of a copse. Chuha Saidan Shah lay close to this wood and the rose-bushes that year by year distil its famous attar of roses. They skirted it and confronted a ladder-like lane, down which in a cascade of sprawling limbs and dislocated brown necks dropped a line of jostling camels. John Fisher put his pony sharply at the steep face of the hill and the camel-drivers with shouts and buffetings made an open path before him. He took his right of way nonchalantly, except to aim one shrewd blow at a camel not clever enough to avoid him. Prudence scrambled up after him and noticed how all men halted, fell back, and let him ride unfollowed towards a bungalow which stood, white and imposing, above a loud-voiced waterfall in the soft silence of a garden where narcissi grew.

A woman waited in the verandah: a golden girl, fair as Prudence and John were dark. The flawless white and rose of her complexion, the sky-blue of her eyes, the sunshine of her hair, gave the atmosphere of daylight on a perfect spring day. Yet Joyce was not a pretty woman: she appeared a joyous, healthy, tall creature. Her plain tailor-made was of yesterday's fashion. She was—or looked—just over thirty. But it was towards her that John Fisher had ridden with such zest. They met now with something between them that had transcended their interest in a new arrival. Prudence, who was not deficient in

swift and acute perception, recognised within the first half-hour that she was in the presence of a man and woman most ardently in love. The discovery disappointed and vaguely troubled her.

When the twilight gathered the three sauntered through the garden together. The nearest British regiment was a hundred miles away, the nearest white men were half a dozen drillers employed by an oil company to the north of the Salt Range. The Deputy Commissioner was in distant Jhelum. Scattered through the low and barren hills were villages inhabited by hawk-like Mahomedans; Awans and Janjua Rajputs; uneducated, martial, and with their ears to the ground for all fears, rumours, superstitions and mistrusts that bred in an underworld of whispers. Nevertheless there was peace in the garden, and John Fisher lounged about unarmed and unguarded.

The three, moving slowly, left the vegetables and trees and flowers and stood on the bare bluff behind the bungalow. The fields lay dim at their feet, and lights began to twinkle in the pir's dwelling by the mosque down in little Chuha Saidan Shah. Into the small stuffy post office there twelve hundred ex-soldier men crowded four times a year to draw their hard-won pensions. The air was cold and very still. The Fishers hardly spoke, but the communion between them pressed upon Prudence's nerves. They all walked idly to the edge of the rocky precipice that broke off the bungalow's grounds at one blow. To their immediate left the waterfall flung itself shouting upon sharp boulders down into the echoes of the valley.

"Nothing else could do that," exclaimed Prudence suddenly, pointing to the water. "No other element could survive such violence. It falls, dissolves,

springs high in spray, changes its shape each second, and never yields its will—always uninjured, active, liquid, transparent. Did you ever see such life as it possesses ? ” Her energetic voice held a note of envy. Then she turned half contemptuously towards a few monthly roses that faded at the brink of the cliff. “ Rather a contrast to those still, coloured, scented things, that die so tranquilly.”

“ You’re fond of nature—of the country ? ” John asked with doubting eyes.

In a rush Prudence experienced her supreme desire for human competition, for material success ; she gave a sincere snap of her fingers as she answered, “ I don’t care a fig for any holy calm. I admire vividness and movement.”

“ You do, do you ? So do I,” replied her brother, and laid his hand on his wife’s shoulders and paid his tribute to her white and gold and the gallant dignity of her walk. She acknowledged this with a rejoicing laugh.

They turned back into the bungalow and Prudence noticed how plainly the Fishers camped here. Framed rules for the guidance of travellers hung upon the whitewashed walls : and John’s papers overflowed from the bare table into tin dispatch-cases. There were no personal possessions, or ornaments about. People on tour tarried awhile and then passed on. But when the lamps were brought Joyce went to the windows and drew back the shabby curtains, while the man watched her contentedly. She said to Prudence, “ I like the district to see this house and know that we are here. I want them to watch our lights burning. We mean so much, you see. The man who has only one wife : the woman who marries him of her own choice. The social life that can welcome friendship between men and



women. The Europeans thinking the way out of difficulties for Asiatic millions. We imply all that to them."

And John Fisher struck in, as though to prevent a flippant comment from his sister which might appear to snub this golden girl. "You're in touch with realities, Joyce, but I expect Prudence would describe Chuha Saidan Shah as a place with nobody in it."

And at this shrewd hit her temper was swift to reply, "Perhaps some day it will be known as the place where Prudence Graham stayed."

He raised his eyebrows. "You contemplate becoming a celebrity? What's your line?"

To which she replied mysteriously, "Perhaps I'll consult you about that, before I leave here," and received little encouragement from his dry "Good Lord!"

In her bedroom as she undressed that night, she looked out and felt all the wild district urged swift and silent as a moth towards the light set upon the hill. It went out about midnight where the Fishers slept, but in the empty and silent middle room the lamps burnt till dawn as though Joyce still made a generous signal to the dark homes below them.

Staring at the dawn when it filtered through his windows next morning Prudence tried to state her case sufficiently concisely and persuasively to win her brother's support. She felt that if she were slow in getting to the point he would not even listen. It was not easy to compose the phrases that should serve her. She found herself prone to expostulate with fate, to declaim against her poverty as unfair, against the marriage laws as unjust. Paul presented a difficult aspect of the affair because she could accuse

him of nothing but his lack of money and position. Prudence admitted that, for a young woman, life in Peshawar afforded far more entertainment than Chuha Saidan Shah; yet Joyce Fisher appeared to find everything necessary to her happiness and content. "It is because she is so mad about John," thought Prudence. It was most unfortunate that her special plea for the indulgence due to beauty could not be insinuated here: she felt that she was less distinguished among women than John was among men for sheer physical attraction. Moreover he had no eyes for her face: his admiration was for that woman of his own age, not well dressed, with the big laughing mouth, and wonderful fairness.

Joyce greeted Prudence in tones of consolation at breakfast, "No letter from Paul; there has not been time yet. But you are sure to get one tomorrow."

Prudence replied a little nervously, "I don't suppose he'll write for a few days: he had fever."

"Oh my dear!" Joyce was all sympathy. "How you must have hated coming away!"

"He refused to let me remain and nurse him," said Prudence, her eyes on the table. "He is always getting these attacks of malaria. There's nothing to fuss about, but it is a bore for him."

"It must be," said John with raised eyebrows.

Breakfast being a meal devoted to good resolutions and social reserve Prudence let the subject drop. She wondered fretfully how the day would be spent, and found that John had office work to contend with and meant to ride to a village called Wahula, and that Joyce proposed to housekeep and garden. She offered Prudence a choice of books and a chair on the verandah. The long slow hours dragged on, broken by an interval

for lunch. The camp fare was very plain. Then Joyce and John disappeared into the garden till he rode away to Wahula. It was late in the afternoon before Joyce sat down beside Prudence and suggested a good talk.

Prudence roused herself and began deliberately to paint a picture, as she saw it, of her life in Peshawar: most wives of captains in Indian infantry played insignificant parts in so big a drama of men and women, but Prudence Graham really counted. Paul did not care for going out, but his wife was sought after. She held the lead among the younger women of her set, but did not value that position. No, the startling fact about this Prudence Graham was that men like the General and Ronald Warwick were so deeply interested in her. She had power over their emotions. In fact she was not an ordinary person at all. She was something exceptional; and jealousy, conventionality, legal rights, and male possessiveness opposed her. In spite of adoration, and the gaiety of her dancing feet, she was unhappy. Think of it, she seemed to say to the quiet listener beside her, a woman like Prudence Graham, *unhappy!*

Joyce appeared to follow the story with sympathy. She made little reassuring murmurs. But her first question was disconcerting: "You have been married about four years, John told me. Are you restless and miserable because you have no child?"

Prudence was definite in answer to that: they could not afford to be parents, she said. She lived in dread of finding herself a mother, and she resented being threatened by this anxiety.

"Then," said Joyce gently, "it must be that Paul causes you unhappiness?"

Prudence merely remarked with a sigh. "One is cruelly punished for a mistake. Our marriage was so improvident and impulsive and rash. We were young fools."

Joyce suggested a remedy. "Consult John," she advised.

The other woman shot a searching glance at her. "He'll be bored with my troubles," she muttered.

"I'll tell him you are in some difficulty and want his advice," said Joyce. "He is very just and clear-sighted. Perhaps you won't get a chance to talk things over to-night, for he will have had his fill of other people's problems at Wahula. He has a marvellous influence over the men in this district and they besiege him the moment he leaves the garden. But I'll tell him."

"All right," agreed Prudence. She was annoyed that the wife claimed prior consideration for her husband's fatigue. People were always so full of their own affairs, she grumbled to herself. It was the typical complaint of an egotist. But she had to submit. The day passed and found her no further advanced towards her goal.

Yet Joyce had not failed her. With her golden hair swinging in a plait across her shoulder she talked low and long to John in the privacy of their bedroom. She found him strangely reluctant to give his sister a hearing.

His face was darkened by a frown that hung over its beauty like a thundercloud as he said, "I knew what it would be when she invited herself here: trouble. Prudence is like our mother; there is no peace to be found in her."

"But she is truly unhappy. You could see it in her face, hear it in her voice. It was as definite as a child's distress: really sincere. Somehow you

champion it as you instinctively champion a child in trouble," his wife pleaded.

John listened restlessly. "Oh, I know, I know. I used to agonise as a boy, I tell you, when my mother poured out her woes to me. Burdened me with them. My father, she said, had never understood her. I hated his memory. She made her limited income a miserable humiliation to me. I was imbued with her notion that all enforced self-denial wronged her. Having wrung the last pang of pity out of my poor little heart she would float off and leave me without a word of information as to the financial crisis she had disclosed to me. I used to sweat with shame and fear about my school bills, because she had shaken the foundations of my life by saying, 'I can't imagine what will happen about the expenses here! I have not a penny with which to meet them.' Yet, when she married Prudence's father she played upon my feelings till I was idiotic with jealousy. She made Geoffrey White as miserable as I suppose my father had been. She trafficked in all our emotions in turn. When I grew up I realised it, as her husband did—but I could not become immune from the effect she had on one's spirits and nerves."

Joyce brooded over this, serene and pitiful: "She must have possessed the quality of pathos. No wonder you responded with your heart rather than your head. But Prudence is not a mere repetition of your mother. She has her own life to lead and she is up against some difficulty. I did not like to ask questions. Do help her, John."

He gave a rueful laugh. "I wish she had not come here. She is a chip of the old block and so am I. You will detect the family likeness and it will emphasise all my defects to you. You'll observe

the cheap stuff." As he spoke he held out his arms to her.

And for answer she said in her steady way, with her hand upon his head, "For better or worse, John."

For what is there in all the world for me  
But what I know and see ?  
And what remains of all I see and know  
If I let go ?

G. W. YOUNG.

A CROWD of peasants moved slowly out of the garden, and John Fisher gathered up his papers and sought his sister. She was seated dramatically on the very edge of the precipice, watching the triumphant leap of the nimble water as one fascinated. And she deliberately abstained from turning her head at his approach, or giving any sign of greeting.

He sprawled his length on the grass beside her and said abruptly : " I hear you want to consult me about something."

She asked with a casual air, " Why do you dislike me ? "

He retorted, " You find me as inhospitable as all that ? "

But she persisted, " Joyce doesn't."

He growled, " Joyce, by the grace of God, finds something in us that has merit. Leave it at that. But she tells me you are in trouble. What's up ? "

Prudence replied with an economy of words, very different from the long story she had rehearsed. " You are happily married. I am not."

John enquired gravely, " Does Paul beat you ? "

She answered with an air of merry honesty, " Certainly not. Paul is what you men call a good sort."

He meditated aloud : " Now let's see. What do

men—the type of men you’ve met—call a good sort? A dependable man; he does not let you down. Not out for himself entirely. A modest fellow: does not advertise. Rather a sportsman, and never unintentionally offensive. Sees a joke and minds his own business. Is that more or less a description of Paul?”

“More or less,” she agreed.

“Does he bore you?” John asked.

“He is not uninteresting,” the wife replied. “But we have not the same interests.”

John made no comment on that. “Does he philander?”

“No. He is in love with *me*,” said Prudence quickly.

“Any objection to that?” the man asked curtly. She hesitated and he put his cross-examination in a different form. “Find him objectionable as a lover?”

Something unstained in Prudence made her shrink but made her truthful: “Never that,” said she.

“Then he ‘does not understand you’? He ‘hurts your feelings’ in a thousand little ways? You ‘stifle in his presence’?” John suggested dryly.

“Not in the very least, thank you,” his sister replied.

“I am glad,” John responded.

His voice became quite friendly. “I congratulate you on your common sense. Those temperamental fandangoes don’t appeal to me, I confess. Well, put the thing in a nutshell if you can.”

“I *loathe* poverty,” she announced.

“Quite so,” her brother murmured. “Well, you are your mother’s daughter and you come by that honestly. Paul’s a poor man, of course. And you knew it when you married him. But you wished to be his wife and later—too late—you began to count



the cost of self-denial. Have you any bills that he doesn't know of?"

She turned her face to give him a frank stare. "Certainly not," she replied.

"Ah, there you differ from our mother," he commented. "~~She would have had drawers full of them, and would have called the tradesmen greedy robbers.~~"

"I thought you were fond of her?" Prudence struck in.

"I was—to my cost. But I was not fond of her debts," John retorted. Then he added, "You force me to suggest to myself that Paul has a rival in your affections."

"I knew you would imagine that," cried the girl triumphantly. "That's one of the difficulties: there is *no one* whom I like well enough to put him in Paul's place."

Her brother appeared puzzled, but he said, "I see: if Paul were a rich man you would stick to him happily. As he is a poor man you are, shall we say—looking round for a change?" He challenged her sharply: "Is that so, or not? Yes, or no?"

"Yes, *and* no," she replied. "I want to change my existence. I am not in love with Paul. I won't sacrifice the whole of my life to him. Why should I? But I am not in search of a lover. A lover, rich or poor, would seek me, find me, sweep me off my feet, change the values of heaven and earth for me. Do you think I am such a fool as not to know that? But by myself I can't work that miracle. For me, Prudence Graham"—here she pressed her hands upon her breast as though in a supreme effort to reveal personality—"there is only the prosaic world of things I want to do, things I want to possess. If you were mated to a likeable person whom you did not love, would it suffice you to hoe a tiny cabbage

patch for both all your life long? Would you agree to be limited by her limitations?"

John frowned at her, at her fascination, and her wild leap towards the grapes of her desire. He said slowly, "You need—you require—something I can't give you. Ideals. Salvation."

If she were utterly taken by surprise she was swift to retort: "Perhaps, but I ask for help you *can* give me. I want a loan of money to pay for my passage home, and keep me for six months while I start a career of my own. Honest injun, that's what I want."

"Money," he echoed. "Munitions of war. And Paul, you say, is a good sort. Why should I arm you against him?"

"Because I'm your sister," said Prudence softly.

"You've made a mistake," he replied without heat. "I'm on Paul's side. Men stand by each other oftener than you think."

"No!" she cried with indignation. "No. It is not personal—your adherence to Paul; it is your masculine love of abstractions like vows and fealties and sacrifice. Now just listen to me: I realise that I have made a mistake and I do not mean to spend my life trying to make that mistake function. I don't intend to run off the social rails like an engine does and be smashed and irreparable, but I do mean to leave the path you've all marked out for me, and upon which I was fool enough to plant my feet. I intend to climb up alone to an existence that suits me." She read in his face that he found her unconvincing, and she cut short her eloquence to snap at him. "I must have love or money. I possess neither."

He looked at her dark beauty, so like his own, and at the enraged clutch of her hands at emptiness.

She starved in a world that admired her to the point of flirtation only. She wanted to work for position and wealth. She was boring herself to death at the very contemplation of duty. He had recognised that she was deficient in the development of any spiritual personality; it was a fatal lack, he thought.

Prudence said with poignant wistfulness: "You are lucky, John. You are in love with Joyce."

"And Joyce returns it," her brother asserted violently. "That is everything to me. If I were Paul and had to watch that insolent little indifferent face of yours there would be murder done. Joyce gives one all that is humanly possible: she is companionable, she is kind—always kind. And she is trustworthy beyond compare."

Prudence made no comment. In her mind's eye she saw Peshawar recognising the virtues of Mrs. Fisher, but adoring the charms of Mrs. Graham. Then she realised the other side of the picture: Joyce radiant with serene happiness, and herself frenzied by discontent.

John spoke deliberately: "Take a pull, my girl. There is the making of a waster in you or me."

"There is the making of a tyrant in you," remarked his sister. She dropped her vivid white face into her hands.

"Sorry," said John. Then he got up and left her.

He reported briefly to his wife. "She is a soulless creature, Undine incarnate. But she is dangerous—with that voice, with those infernal looks! She wanted money and I refused." He added: "She is far more formidable than our mother and no fool."

The bearer advanced, bringing them a telegram. John whistled as he read it. Then he announced: "That husband of hers wants to know if we can put him up. He has ten days' leave. Needs a change

from malaria, I suppose. If I were in his shoes I would not pursue the lady."

"There is only the one room," said Joyce, doubtfully.

"That settles it. I'll wire for him to come," was the somewhat unexpected rejoinder.

When Prudence heard she said, as though exhilarated, "I never get any peace, do I?"

. . . This will go onward the same  
Though Dynasties pass.

THOMAS HARDY.

AN eagle swinging against a wind soared high above the low crests of the Salt Range, mapped beneath his wings. There was a stir in the valleys. Janjua Rajputs from Dandot were afoot, leaving behind them the coal-mine beneath their village and the veiled women in their houses who refused all bribes to work in the darkness below, since by work for wage the purdah was broken. He who pays the piper calls the tune, so the women starved in preference. Watli, also, was astir with Janjuas. And Awans from Wahula, Daryala Kahan and Dalyalpore were converging on Dalwal. There were Awan women on the roads too, old and young, and not a few children: boys for the most part. Veterans with grey beards and the stamp of hardship and poverty upon them accompanied the halt and the maimed, for the wounded were moving with the rest. Post offices with narrow twisting lanes leading to them formed the rendezvous of the wayfarers; the small courtyards were thronged. Here was the final goal of a victorious army. Here was the last fulfilment of a marriage drama, or a courageous motherhood. Here the orphans took what a dead hand had earned. Here and thus were pledges redeemed that had drawn young men in thousands from stone and rubble villages and upland valleys and bleak hill-tops to

perish in unspeakable ways, or to return with their clay a twisted image of Punjab manhood. The discarded khaki of the army clad these warriors, still, with brown military greatcoats, and on their breasts were the ribbons of a great tribulation.

The eagle swooping and shifting was not a witness of peace. All round the post offices of the Salt Range was bitter contention. The patience of the East has its limits. In a squalid enclosure a subadar major of infantry was kept waiting like a coolie; the courtesy of a chair denied him by an upstart petty official from a softer Hindustan. The officer had memories of a levee at Calcutta when he carried his sword to a Viceroy among British officers; of a victorious march through London to Buckingham Palace: of a farewell dinner in the Mess when he entered to occupy a seat at the colonel's right hand, and the Chota Sahib, whose father had recruited him thirty years ago, led the singing of "For he's a jolly good fellow"—the words unintelligible to the Awan, but the intention as unmistakable as the intention of this insulting son of a pig who held the power of the purse over fighting men.

The great bird battled now over another office where a little old woman, anxious and intent, whispered in her faint voice the words of her petition to a letter-writer who, indifferent, acted as a scribe for the illiterate. Very urgently the mother dictated her oft-repeated prayer to the Powers that Be. Gulam Mahomed Khan, her gunner son, had nominated his father for the family pension of eight rupees a month, and the old man had died ten days after he heard the news of his son's death in action. The widowed mother begged, very humbly, that the pension might be continued to her for the stark reason that she starved on cold village charity. This only son had

died unmarried: a young soldier. His mother's voice, in his own land, faltered at the end of the petition as she gave the address. "Basra ke jagha," she mumbled. Mesopotamia, where the boy was dust. And by this mistake she doomed herself to perish pensionless, and the petition to wander ghostlike from indifferent babu to indifferent babu, while the battery kept its powder dry in Quetta of Baluchistan.

The eagle seemed to dwell apart in serene air and the soldiers below to be irritable and insistent as crows. For the day was waning and in several of the post offices delay was deliberate. The pensioners would have to bribe or come again to-morrow. Harsh clamour arose, tempered by cajolery. Cattle needed water, the land called for labour, dark roads meant slow journeys. The little crowds rocked restlessly, but began to bribe. A woman clad in a shapeless cotton burkha, with eye-holes too small to reveal the passion of her angry eyes, received into the palm of her outstretched hand—a young hand rendered hard by much grinding of corn—fifteen rupees, and enquired whether sanction for payment of the increased rate of twenty-four rupees had not been received by the postmaster. Government had announced the higher rate in March 1921, nearly two years ago. The Hindu replied casually that there was nothing more for her. She stood there impassive with the fifteen rupees, that were to keep her, her blind father-in-law and her old mother-in-law, for three months, tied up in a twist of cloth. The babu dawdled over the entries on her pension paper and then handed it back, and as she slipped it into its tin case he told her that her husband's medals had been sent to her from his regiment. She held out her skinny hands again for the little packet in his

fat brown paw. "There are two rupees to pay," said the babu.

She cried out in anger, but the man of the pen was adamant, and the pensioners whom she delayed shouted protests, some complaining of her hesitation, and some abusing the official for his extortions. The office and the courtyard rang with furious voices, and the widow turned the expressionless white folds of cotton now here, now there, seeking for adequate support against this tyranny, but finding none. A few vultures settled on the roof and in the dirty lane outside as though summoned there by some spirit, and shadows lengthened. Then she took two rupees from their hiding-place and yielded them up. The packet was tossed to her and she melted away through the knot of soldiers. She could not read her own name on the little parcel: Janat Khatoon, which signifies Lady of Heaven. Nor could she read the name of her late lord: Sepoy Mahomed Shah of a regiment now disbanded. She only knew that here in her hands was the token of his great honour. As she looked at the bronze medal that bore the very colour of his skin she forgot for a moment that his pension, which dated from his death in battle during February 1916, was paid at the old starvation rates and that the arrears on the increased rates due from April 1918 were still withheld. She lifted up the second medal and examined a Sahib's head upon it and saw on the reverse side a Sahib mounted, without clothing, upon a horse: strange figures. Lastly she scrutinised the third, her eyes searching its details through the bars of her burkha's eyeholes; the long rays of the evening sun shivered upon its silver and a winged man who was most marvellous to the Lady of Heaven. The sunset caught and intensified the colours of its ribbon, dark blue through green to



yellow, and so to the heart of the matter—a streak of blood. She stood for some moments looking down on that very curiously. This Eastern woman responded to the colour, the silver, the bauble. But as she turned away she cursed blastingly the babu who had exacted two rupees after a man's life had paid the price in full. The price for what? The territory of her clan lay all about her: she daily ate the bread of carefulness. She turned the victory medal over on her palm; it said, "The Great War for Civilisation 1914-1918," and told her illiterate mind nothing. The widow of an Awan, she had no politics. As she walked towards her home Janat Khatoon was conscious only of a great need for protection. Their holding of land was very small, and half the produce had to be given to the tenant who cultivated it. She lifted her burkha and faced the solitude of the road. Her face had fine features and an iron fortitude. Three mouths, three months, three rupees each for food per month in order to live; it was a simple proposition. Clutching the dead Mohomedan soldier's three medals—a cross, a British sovereign's head, an invocation of foreign civilisation, the Lady of Heaven muttered in despair, "Allah! Did not the King take victory from Mahomed Shah's hand? Will the King let me starve?"

The eagle over her head, soaring, soaring, might have been symbolical of a German victory, so bitter was the sense of abandonment and defeat in that Indian widow's breast.

Paul Graham, approaching, looked up at the eagle and thought of enemy aeroplanes hovering about the Indian contingent in France before the battle of Loos. The company of soldiers he commanded then had been born and bred in the district he rode through now. He was accompanied by one illaquadar only

on his journey from Chakwal, and towards the end of his march to Chuha Saidan Shah he began to meet the pensioners returning from scattered post offices.

"Many of the sepoy-people receive their pensions to-day and to-morrow," remarked the illaquadar.

"Are they content?" asked the officer.

"Some are, Sahib," replied the Janjua Rajput. "To many the Sarkar gives good pensions. But those who receive pensions for other wars are very poor. The transport people also. It is hard on them. My son was killed, Sahib. His son receives the pension, by the favour of the Presence."

"Your son was killed? Alas," said Graham.

"Huzoor. . . . We are the servants of the Sarkar."

Homeward bound, the men of war saluted Graham in passing. It was an event to thus encounter a Sahib. "Captain Sahib hai," announced the illaquadar, and the interest and welcome increased in all the rugged faces.

Paul pulled up his pony and greeted the soldiers after a very friendly fashion. Questions and answers came like the roll of distant drums from their deep voices. Names of battalions, the movements of troops, the promotion of officers—of these matters they spoke. The presence of this British soldier among them reinforced all their traditions, and intensified their relationship to authority, to the crown itself. Here was real intimacy. He had served as they had served. He joked with them, and their stolid minds responded cheerfully. When they got home they repeated his words, saying, "Thus and thus jested the Sahib. A good Sahib." Medals were polished that night and there was a general smartening up, for the Captain Sahib had said he would remain some days at the rest house and very certainly they would go and salaam. There might

be an opportunity to lay such and such a difficulty before him ; but in any case they would speak with him again.

In his greatly cherished shabby tweed coat, looking thin and tired after fever, but faultlessly shaved, Paul exercised considerable patience as the daylight faded and the air grew colder. He did not hurry past any pensioner, and that leisurely air of his gave them confidence. An old grey-beard who wore the medal ribbon of the Tirah campaign straightened his back to salute him and Paul drew rein to have a talk with him. A woman stood modestly in the background, and beside her, wide-eyed with interest as he gaped at a Sahib, was a sturdy boy.

"Sahib," said the ancient in toothless fashion, "here is a boy who has not received his pension."

"Right-oh," said Graham. "Are there any papers?"

The woman's white draperies stirred and the little boy handed to the old man the papers she gave to him. He passed them on to Graham, mumbling, "These people are of my village."

Paul read the Army Certificate which recorded that Bahadour Ali of the — Punjabis was admitted to the Indian Order of Merit, First class, for conspicuous gallantry at H . . . on October 30, 1914, fighting a machine-gun section when one gun was put out of action by a shell, and the whole detachment of the other gun had been killed. Bahadour Ali died of wounds that same night. His widow, Raj-bi, drew the pension and the Order of Merit allowance.

Graham asked, "Who is that boy?"

"He is Haidar Khan, the son of Bahadour Ali."

"Is that his mother?" Graham referred to the silent woman in the burkha.

"She is his mother and the House of Bahadour

Ali. She receives the pension, but by the favour of the Sarkar there is now an order that children also are pensioned separately. The son till he is eighteen ; the daughter till marriage. Two rupees a month."

"That is known to me," Graham said, and the illaquadar rebuked the garrulous old soldier by shouting at him, "*All* things are known to the Captain Sahib."

"Has the mother petitioned to the Colonel Sahib of the regiment about Haidar Ali's pension?" Graham asked.

"Many times, Sahib," the veteran said very patiently.

"How old is the boy?" Graham enquired.

The little lad, the grey beard, and the illaquadar hazarded different guesses.

"How old did the mother say he was in the petition?" the officer questioned again.

It appeared that the woman, who could not read nor write, and who had no knowledge of any calendar, to whom it was unknown that thirty days hath September, April, June, and November, and that the year the war broke out was known as 1914, who reckoned time by events only, had given her son's age as six years, on the advice of the scribe who wrote the petition and who was skilled in postponing the eighteenth birthday of a candidate for a pension.

Graham's eyes twinkled as he reread the date of the father's death eight years ago and summarised the probable comment of the regimental office—remote from any personal touch—on the petition and petitioner. "That boy is more than six years old," he affirmed solemnly.

"God knows," quoth the illaquadar.

There came a faint murmur from the shrouded face in the background.

"She says her son was still in the womb when his father perished," said the old man. "It is true."

"Without doubt," agreed the illaquadar.

Bahadour Ali had leave that summer before war broke out. He left his immortality here in his village, and was killed in the trenches of Flanders before there was anything fresh to enter on his sheet-roll. Graham nodded thoughtfully and took out his pencil and notebook. "I will take the son's name and address," he said. "It is all right, you know. He'll get his pension." He closed the book with a snap of the elastic band which fascinated the lad's bright eyes. Seeing that, Graham snapped it again for him and laughed. "Not seen elastic before, eh? You'll get a pension from the Sarkar. Later you will become a recruit."

"Reply to the Sahib, and salaam," said the veteran severely.

"Salaam!" said Bahadour Ali son, profoundly impressed.

There came again a murmur from the veiled woman.

"She says," said the old pensioner, "that they have no need of this money for their stomachs. They do not hunger. There is much land. It is for the sake of honour."

"It is the boy's right," said the British officer, and rode on.

His kinsfolk greeted him with surprise at his tardy arrival when at length he reached the rest-house in the quiet garden. "What delayed you?" asked Fisher.

"I met a lot of men I knew," answered the Londoner, for all the world as though he came straight from the Naval and Military Club. And instantly his sister-in-law, Joyce, felt her heart warm to him.

Prudence had accepted without resentment the





stretched her arms above her head with a lazy and provocative grace. Paul's eyes were upon her and she rejoiced to receive tribute to her beauty again. John had inexorably withheld it. "To me," she asserted, "this place is a theatre in which the stalls are empty, not a soul in the dress circle, and the pit occupied by aliens who misinterpret every gesture I make." So saying she strolled away to change for dinner, shivering a little in the cold of a January evening.

John remarked afterwards to his wife that all beautiful women should experience grief and know tragedy, lest the emotions they evoke break upon them like a wave upon a stony beach instead of being a spring flowing into their own great reservoir. "She has no heart," he said angrily.

"I think she is very honest," said Joyce slowly. "If she ever feels love it will be true love."

Paul, who detested all personal remarks, made no comment on the Fishers or the conversation, and after dinner he talked shop and the two English-women listened while the men very heartily cursed their Government. John, looking glum and morose, accused it of vacillation and of a failure to keep its promises. He had worked terribly hard to get into the Indian Civil Service: the result of his labours was a brilliant success in all examinations. But he had set his face towards what proved to be a mirage. He had seen as his goal Great Britain ruling the Indian Empire. This, he said, was what the mass of the people of India still needed. No other Power was so impartial. To that end the martial classes had fought. Then, suddenly, a much-disputed and fundamental change took place in the government of over two hundred million people, and arrogated to itself the title and merits of a Reform—much as



though a remedy proclaimed itself a cure. He, John, found himself a member of a doomed service: dried up at the source, since the keenest young brains in England were not likely to devote their energies to carrying out the policy of Indian legislators. "I've been let in," said John Fisher. "They've taken my preliminary work and they are using the best stuff that is in me now to the fatal end of an abdication of real British authority. I can lead an Indian and he can't bribe me. That's our relationship. He has brains, but his whole character suffers from sunstroke. There are about fifty millions of us British and we don't ask anybody's permission to govern ourselves. When Germany wanted to take over the job we fought to a man. There are more than three hundred million people in India and they have to agitate for self-government! If we leave they'll fight *each other* about it. We say now, 'Self-government for India?' Right-oh. But *when*? The people in this district put this problem quite differently. They are saying to-day: 'This Raj is going. So be it. Which of our peoples will become the Raj?' That's the difference—we ask, *when*? They ask, *which*? As regards the Punjab, the Akalis are making a fine bid for it. Premature, but characteristic. The Salt Range will resist them to the last drop of its blood of course."

Their grumbling continued far on into the night, and the officer's face, worn with fever, showed haggard in the wan lamplight. "Well, so long as I'm not axe'd I shan't worry," he said, slowly fingering his pipe. "That would be the very devil for me. I don't know how to be anything but a soldier. Sandhurst and war don't equip you for anything else. Government offers certain financial terms to the axe'd but—good Lord!—that is only paying a fine for

breaking a bargain. It restores nothing. You have to fit your life into so many years : it is a time scheme. You don't know the date of the finish, but, given a normal duration, you know the general conditions. I cannot get back the years I have given to soldiering. There's the spirit of a bargain as well as the letter. If they axe me now I think they'll have missed the spirit of the bond somehow. During infernal times in the war I was frightened to death by lots of things. But I never feared just this: that after coming through with all my limbs and no black mark against me as a soldier, I'd be kicked out five years after the victory."

"Any chance of it?" said his brother-in-law.

"It is a possibility," Paul replied reluctantly. "And I'm rotten with malaria." Then he flung this personal anxiety aside with a resolute air. "What about the pensioners round here?" he asked. "How are we keeping our bargain with them?"

"The amount of income received in some of these villages through pay and pensions must be pretty big," replied John Fisher. "I don't know what these Salt Range fellows would do without the Army."

The soldier looked at him keenly for a moment: a scrutinising glance. "I am glad we pay up all right," he said in his cheery way. "But there is more in it than cash. I expect some of these men are pretty lonely, really. They must miss their regiments. Oh, I know their land and their family are the first consideration with them. But—we taught them a way of living, you see."

Suddenly Prudence flung herself into the conversation and ruthlessly insisted on incarnating in her own person the problems the men discussed. "I am like the British Government," she declared, through half-

closed lips, between which hung her cigarette. Her eyes laughed darkly in their narrowed slits. "I sway, I approach, I attack, I attach. And people meet me more than half-way. They want to belong to me in a sense. Oh, I begin all right. People like me when I arrive as a stranger. Some men fall in love at first sight—you see what I mean?" She bent forward and looked into the critical, embarrassed faces of her husband and her brother. Both were rendered uneasy by her lack of reticence; but were fascinated, not bored. For a moment she laughed, and she had the great gift of laughter. It came with the refreshing naïvety of spontaneous mirth, and musically. She repeated, "Yes, I *begin* all right . . . it is when I leave off that the trouble starts, and the discontent."

"When you leave off being young, for instance," John suggested grimly.

"Quite so," Paul said in a good-humoured agreement, and this time the two men's faces showed a distinct challenge to her claims.

"Why, then, if I have any tact, I'll die." Prudence admitted with a wry smile. "But that was not what I meant. If *I* break off relationships, disappoint expectations—men grow furious; yet *everything* changes, matures, and desires to expand in its own way."

Joyce stood up. "Well, come to bed now," she said placidly. "It is time to leave off talking."

She had the art of seeming to lead them all to rest. Softly she moved through the bare rooms, turning this lamp down and that lamp higher, shutting the dark world out behind the doors she closed and letting the fresh air in by the windows she opened. John Fisher followed her to their room, and on its threshold all critical irritation left his face and

he went in like a man ardently happy. Paul turned to the room he was to share with his wife and bore himself as one who had his emotions well in hand and a will to carry out what his mind resolved, but joy he had none.

Very old are we men ;  
Our dreams are tales  
Told in dim Eden  
By Eve's nightingales ;  
We wake and whisper awhile,  
But, the day gone by,  
Silence and sleep like fields  
Of amaranth lie.

WALTER DE LA MARE.

THE mental outlook of Prudence Graham was not through a window at the world, but into a looking-glass at herself darkly. Her introspection was intense, blinding, and in Chuha Saidan Shah she had given proof of her inability to face any solitary existence. It was her ambition to treat her marriage certificate as a scrap of paper, for she regarded a bargain as a good bargain only when she got the best of it, and she discovered little *mental* kinship between herself as a party to a contract, and the people all about her in the Salt Range struggling for pensions, and the talk of John and Paul discussing policy and profession. That terribly difficult contract between a young man and his country which had been fulfilled in blood, was to Prudence just the boring old war that she strove to forget. She had none of Joyce's mysterious sense of a spiritual obligation in a sworn oath, in a vow made before an altar. She did not, like Paul, accept philosophically the rules laid down by dead generations for the formal contract of marriage. Prudence was utterly unconscious of the

queer bargain to be carried through somehow between India's 350 millions and Great Britain. She lacked the 'awareness' which ideals bestow. She was shut in, the prisoner of her own denseness. But she had begun to experience and recognise something of loss. Those words of Paul, "I swear I'll never ask you to give me your love against your will"—had been his answer to her outcry against the duties of matrimony when she had said, "Do you mean you want my body? I tell you I belong to myself." And Paul's word was his bond. The night passed in pride. And she questioned, did she truly belong to herself as she had boasted, or was she so fitly mated to this young husband of hers that to lie there divorced from him brought regret, brought frustration? Undoubtedly she was restless, angry. She had been taken at her word. A man's sensitive pride and honour were now in command of all other emotions. "This is not marriage. This is not freedom. This is fraud," thought Prudence in the dawn, and her imagination awakened ever so little to the drama of the strange contracting of love, authority, time, money, life itself.

The day discovered Paul as something of a conjurer. The place changed. Intimacies, which the radiance of Joyce's lamps had failed to disclose, came to light owing to his presence at the rest-house. Soldiers tramped in and went out all day long; and John's grasping entourage, ever on the look out for bribes, was entirely defeated by the simplicity of Paul's methods of intercourse with the Salt Range. He sat with his pipe in the open, and commanded a clear view of the entrance to the garden. Every now and then he sent for an extra chair. A good many of the Mahomedan officers who visited him had put on their uniforms to honour the event. Occa-

sionally the group laughed, and once or twice deep voices betrayed indignation. But always the little things counted: Paul's regiment and the regiment of a subadar, who had dyed his beard magenta, had been most distressingly mixed up in a trench in Mesopotamia. A jemadar remembered Paul's visit to a hospital ward in Egypt; he had been in the next bed to the mortally wounded Indian officer whom Paul had gone to see. And this man had played against Paul in a hockey match. There was the brotherhood of the Army here: sahib and sardar, they knew each other's ways when furious fate with its cruel curiosity put to each man the searching questions only danger asks. Military discipline had given them all the same training, imposed upon a very different education. And the Salt Range told Paul things: agitators had been in their village proclaiming service in army, or police, to be a sin, and against the teachings of the Koran. "But *we* said," chuckled a burly Mahomedan soldier, "had not Turkey an army?" The ridiculousness of the non-recognition of that fact by the politician who had failed to fight tickled these men greatly.

"I said—how did I lose my leg?" related a gaunt havildar, wounded in Gallipoli. This quotation of his repartee was so well received, especially by Paul, who waved his pipe at him very appreciatively, that he repeated it several times till the group lost interest in it.

Towards evening something was said that moved Paul, moved him so that his tanned cheeks stung and his eyes went hot. Gave to him something incommunicable, and touching to the heart. As the sun went down over Chuha Saidan Shah someone had reminded Paul of an episode in Mesopotamia when a boat carrying wounded ran on to a sand-

bank while a blinding dust-storm lifted the desert into the sky. "Yes, I remember," Paul said. "Queer thing; I dreamt of that only the other night."

And a sepoy exclaimed in astonishment, "I did not know that the Sahiblog dreamed!"

At that the Londoner looked at the soldier from little Dalwal very intently and he said to the wounded lad, who thought a sahib's intellect superior to the futile fantasy of dreams, "Yes, we dream."

This unity of experience broke down the young soldier's shyness, so that he exclaimed to the British officer as one who reveals great news, "Huzoor, how often in my dreams have I seen my sahibs!"

There was a little stir in the stalwart gathering: this fellow spoke merely of what happened to each and all and there was small point in it. Yet the sahib gave him a close attention. You would have said that the sahib was as shy as the sepoy, but that like this Haidar Ali he was for the moment unhampered by reserve.

"I sit late by the fire," Haidar Ali continued, most earnestly, "and I think of the war. Later, when I sleep I dream of the war and those things I never did I do. *And then I see my sahibs again.*"

"Without doubt; it happens thus," chorused the soldiers of the Punjab.

But Paul only nodded in silence, quietly fingering his old pipe. When the men left he watched them go; big turbans, iron feet, bulky shadows on the ground and fierce forms against the sky, moving slowly away. He saw a vision of his own race abiding in their minds: "Good God," thought Paul Graham, "we are to them the men who do *not* dream but are dreamt of."

That night he remarked to John Fisher: "If we



ever let down the men who fought in the Indian army our name will deserve to be mud."

"Some of the demobilised soldiers are very unsatisfactory and give a lot of trouble," remarked the other.

"They want discipline: the Punjab requires to be governed; not agitated and propitiated," growled Paul. Then he muttered words which caught the attention of his wife: "If it comes to a separation I'd rather they deserted us, than that we deserted them."

Joyce said wistfully: "You officers have given them a spirit. I don't know that anyone else has. Do the petty Indian officials abstain from bribery and corruption because John and the deputy commissioner keep clean hands? Not they. Are the Janjua Rajput women at Dandot in less strict purdah because I am unveiled? No. Does an Awan think a new bride treachery to his poor wife because the British don't admit such a social system? No. And does the Hindu widow in Chakwal regard herself as free to remarry, or consider that marriage can be dissolved by divorce, because my code and the code of Prudence are different from hers? Never. How much do we influence this great rural population of northern India I wonder?"

Paul answered her with a comradeship that Prudence had never seen his manner imply to a woman: "I think our presence and authority in the land tend slowly to exorcise a lot of their rotten ideas about caste and purdah, and to solve many of their difficulties. For our rule has been an expenditure of all our own hard-won experience, rather than a political experiment at India's expense. But it is a queer show; a queer show."

That night Joyce followed Prudence to her bed-

room and stood, rather embarrassed, by her sister-in-law's dressing-table. "I think your Paul is a dear," she remarked tentatively.

Prudence flung herself down on the bed and said: "I wonder if you could understand me the least little bit in the world, Joyce, if I confessed something."

"Perhaps I could," said Joyce.

"Well, I don't suppose you think John was a perfect saint before he married you," Prudence began, staring up at the ceiling. "I am not being as personal as I sound because I don't *know* a single thing about John. But he is very good-looking, isn't he? If he had been a woman's lover before he met you, can't you picture him giving ardour, and fun and flattery, and having a good time—a kind time, very human and love-making; like a sunny haymaking day in midsummer fields—yet maintaining another side to himself, a *stronger* side, which said that he did not want *marriage* with that woman? For worldly reasons. Everything save marriage. But liking her awfully, liking her as a lover. Can you imagine a situation like that? Could you have accepted it as part of the history—the *young* history—of John, without thinking him a brute, or an idiot?"

"Such a sad thing often happens. Just that," responded Joyce, looking out in horror at the moonlight.

Prudence moved restlessly. "My circumstances are not those adventurous circumstances because a girl such as I was can't embark on an episode," she announced clearly. "But emotionally I'm in that sort of situation. It has been jolly in heaps of ways—big ways, too—being Paul's wife. It has developed and fulfilled one side of me. But not the other.

The worldly side in me is just all on edge—all on the *rampage*—because, having had to undertake marriage as the price of being fully alive, I now have to submit to being a social dormouse till I die. Do you know, Joyce, I lie here *sick* with ambition. Are they such petty things I want—work, achievement, personal fame? Men desire them and grab them. And beauty, luxury, gaiety—I adore them. Why can't I be set free to struggle for them? I'm game to struggle. I think the zest of the effort would be the best part of all probably. I want to be able to kiss my hand to Paul—just as John might have kissed his unsuitable lady love's hand before he rode away—and say, 'Thank you for a long, long honeymoon, my dear—and now I'm off to experience *all the rest*.' I suppose you think that's wicked?"

"Unfair," said Joyce.

The word bit into Prudence. "To whom? To Paul, I suppose. So I must be unfair to myself. Sacrifice. That old superstitious idea. And for that I must yield up all my day-dreams, all my castles in the air, of becoming one of the lucky ones. Oh, if only I had the really great magics to justify me! If only there could come from this throat of mine the music that would compel great audiences to make love to me! I heard Melba once: a woman standing there in a flame-coloured dress with wonderful pearls and hundreds and hundreds of people listening; spell-bound, enchanted. The noise of their hands clapping must have murmured unutterable things to her." Prudence clasped her slim white neck with her own angry hands that felt a lack there. "And I went to the House of Commons once: the stuffy old House of Commons. I expected to be bored. Middle-aged men and lots of bald heads, and they were flopping about on their seats 'idling fright-

fully.' Some of them had their feet stuck up on the table where the mace was, even though they bowed at it, or to it, or to the Speaker's chair—I'm sure I don't know which. It all seemed very dull till, suddenly, one of the members did something they disapproved of and then they began, 'Order, order; order, order, order.' In a chorus, just like that. Deep-voiced and all together. Formidable, you know. And then I felt, Joyce, what it would be to be a woman member of Parliament, *and lovely*, and have all those men making that shout at me! Those are the sort of things that would thrill me. I could never have them, never. But if I made money on the stage and became rich, then I should possess the means to know and influence the big people, the great people, who have power. I am not a snob, but oh, how I weary of the insignificant and the mediocre. If Paul would only enable me to leave him and go to London and try my luck—but he won't. He is as obstinate as any mule." Joyce's silence was as baffling as her own helplessness. Prudence changed her dreamy voice to one of crisp vivacity, as she concluded: "In other days I should have had the temperament to be a king's mistress and make him found universities—great works that last."

"Yes," said Joyce. Then she added, as though with difficulty: "Prudence, you want such *hard* things: jewels. All sharpened and bright and hard. And loud noises: hands clattering together, and voices crashing. Harsh jazz noises. I would as soon spend my life among whirring machinery: powerful, shattering, utterly mechanical. Think of the softness of human love, soft and strong. And far-reaching as this moonlight here that has fallen from the sky. Beautiful, and caressing, and eternal. The one divine emotion that survives death. You

use that face of yours as though it were a weapon: its touch a wound. Why, its touch should bud, fruitful as the springtime. Such richness: not ostentatious, secret. Pure, not public. To be a beloved wife,—isn't that ambitious enough for you? To fulfil all the heart's desire—the heart's desire."

"Ah, you are in love," said lonely Prudence.

"If Paul can teach you to love," said John's wife, "you will owe him a big debt of gratitude."

"I'd pay that debt gladly enough, I suppose," murmured Prudence. "It is sticking to this rotten legal contract that maddens me."

"Oh, Prudence," the other's soft voice whispered, "don't be so hard. If you are, you will be restless all your life long, battling against rigid compulsions."

Something of her calm gentleness captured Prudence's interest. This wife standing there by the window, above the dark valley, seemed in her serene happiness to possess the night and all its glory. Here undoubtedly was a personal achievement as joyous as Melba's triumph of song. There was a spell, too, in the cadence of the words she presently quoted, "Who shall rest upon Thy holy hill?—He that sweareth unto his neighbour and disappointeth him not, though it were to his own hindrance."

Prudence, against her will, admitted that the spiritual could speak with a strange sweet voice.

Joyce came over to her, making a rapid rustle. Seen without the illusion of moonlight she was just a woman of thirty, with a nice face, who was clad in an uninteresting nondescript dress. She bent over Prudence and gave her a motherly hug. And Prudence responded affectionately with a little laugh. "John is very lucky and I hope he deserves it," she said.

Joyce thought, "Prudence has no acids. She is

without cross-grained personal hostilities. If she can lose her life to find it she will have great joys."

As that night slipped away Prudence Graham asked herself with a certain sense that it served her right: "What is Paul to me now? How much do I value what it seems I have lost?"

Prudence noticed that Paul held the ascendancy over John. The fact both surprised and gratified her. It was the sturdy vitality in Paul that impressed John's nerves. He was a cleverer man than Paul, but not so wise; more irritable, more swayed in his judgment by vexation and prejudice. A stout common sense in the officer seemed to pacify the quarrels of the subdivision, as one by one the ex-soldiers came to him for advice and direction. The office of counsellor never made Paul feel 'damned superior': he was simplicity itself in his dealings with these Punjab men. During the week that he spent as the Fishers' guest he became familiar with the district and intimate with the garden. And the land accepted him; he was free of it, no crest too high to climb, no village without a welcome, no acre inaccessible, no road forbidden. Only the women were hidden, veiled, unapproachable. Paul would go strolling with his cocker spaniel; first a round of the garden where the network of slender bare branches etched a fairy thatch to spread a cobweb shade. Then he would drop down the steep hill and, turning to the right, ramble through the brown copse in the valley, talk to the pir sahib by the mosque and, crossing the bridge, stretch his long legs over the bare mountain that walled the narrow gulley on the other side. He was no clerk making a peeping acquaintance with silence and seed and the ways of country folk. This Londoner was a citizen of the world, and quite at home in a rugged neighbourhood all splashed with

sun, thirsting for water, and very dark by night. Though he walked so modestly where hundreds of brown men acquainted themselves with his movements, Paul would not have been an easy man to banish, nor a submissive man if refused admission: he had perhaps acquired the habit of advance. Joyce disclosed this in a casual reminiscence of the burial of the unknown warrior in Westminster Abbey. She spoke of it on the eve of the Grahams' departure, when it seemed sad to her that the Salt Range's veterans of the war were once more to be out of sight of any British officer.

"Did you see that ceremony, Paul?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied, very uncommunicative about his emotions. "I was in the Abbey."

"How did you get there?" enquired John Fisher, alert as to privileges.

"In through a door marked 'Exit only.'" Paul gave the adequate explanation with an air of detachment, and when Joyce exclaimed appreciatively "Goodness! How characteristic," he did not bother to ask her what she meant.

Prudence had gone to Chuha Saidan Shah to seek financial help from her brother, instead she gained some measure of insight into her husband's character. It was as though she studied a familiar face with its eyes turned from her. For never since they first met had Paul passed days and nights by her side without a personal approach, a personal demand. In Chuha Saidan Shah he made none. That intrigued her. Did he care less than she had supposed?

The suggestion of indifference—the faintest suspicion of it—indicated a remote possibility that some day he might let her slip through his fingers. She could thus achieve her freedom. Yet something she

had prized would be dead first and she would have to fly her flag of liberty half mast high. An unpleasing, unflattering thought, for her demands knew no moderation.

When John talked at her, saying that time was always against the extremist, she challenged him by asking, "Do you maintain that moderation is a virtue in all things?"

"Certainly," he replied, and his sister's eyes criticised the arrogance of his face for the hundredth time.

"Then you're wrong," Prudence cried with great energy. "Picture a young man swearing to me, 'I love you moderately well!' And my reply, 'I vow to be moderately faithful to you.' Life is the affair of an extremist."

"Because God made woman," remarked Paul with a chuckle. He lounged out of the room towards the garden and Joyce strolled after him.

"Prudence, you are a pretty fool," John said emphatically.

"Pretty, yes," she agreed with a provoking air of triviality.

"That husband of yours has personality," John continued, "and that's great dynamic value in marriage. He's not just man: he's a man. I doubt if you are enough of a woman for him, in the long run."

"What do you mean?" she promptly enquired.

"My girl," said John, "you take my word for it, marriage is a tight corner, and if you make room for a third you may get edged out."

She still sat staring at him with her great eyes, very puzzled, and he jerked his dark head towards the door. "He attracts Joyce," John most astonishingly announced. "Attracts her awfully. And if



your silly little mind thinks I'm jealous, you are wrong. I don't say I enjoy it; I've not got that sort of generous temperament. But Heaven chaperones Joyce. There's something in her all women require, and when they've got it a husband is safe."

"Yes," said Prudence, instinctively in agreement. "Oh, yes! Joyce would never flirt."

"'Flirt,'" echoed John with dire contempt. "Bah! who is talking of flirtation? You ought to live and die in the Palais de Danse. I only warn you that your Paul is not in your hands in the sense that your wedding-ring is on your finger."

Prudence slipped the ring off and tossed it up and down on the palm of her hand. "I've told you that I want my freedom," she said sullenly.

He shattered all her self-assurance with his laughter.

•

For men are homesick in their homes,  
And strangers under the sun,  
And they lay their heads in a foreign land  
Whenever the day is done.  
Here we have battle and blazing eyes,  
And chance and honour and high surprise ;  
But our homes are under miraculous skies  
Where the yule tale was begun.

G. K. CHESTERTON.

A FRONTIER cantonment is greater than a town in the sense that an army is greater than a mob, a game greater than a solitary pastime. Welfare, not wealth, is the aim of its administration and trophies form its treasure rather than works of art. Its village pump is a gun with a long range. Its social life is spent in a glass house, and personal attractions effect its public opinion, for the young—and the average age in most cantonments is under thirty—learn with their heads but understand with their hearts. Men and women live *vis-à-vis* and those who dwell in other worlds conceive their existence as petty, yet they are public-spirited in an extraordinary degree because their intimacy is one of association with vital interests, which promote something sterner than gossip and impart a knowledge of human nature far wider than that gained by amorous, or political intrigue. An amazing thing is a cantonment, if clearly visualised. Each man in it has been measured, medically examined; then he is physically trained till his body acts in perfect unity with hundreds of

other bodies and his bright eyes turn in his head at the word of command. He moves to music, part of the rhythm of a marching manhood. And, lest this discipline should deprive his person of enterprise, games are organised in which skilled initiative of foot and hand and sight and speed obtains victory. There is a standard for his housing, for his individual cleanliness, for his nourishment and for his health: there is a uniform to distinguish his person, and a time fixed for his sleep. His age, next of kin, and conduct are recorded. His rights are as fully established and as strongly enforced as his duties. There is a price for his labour, but the price for his exalted action is glory. He is subordinate to the civil power but immune from civilian impotency, since *quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* His education is not neglected and his religion receives ministrations. If he perish in battle his enemies are forgiven for him by civilians in the interest of trade relations, and if he survive the trial by combat the verdict of his enlightened countrymen stigmatises the arbitrament of arms as a disgrace to civilisation. Known as a private he has no privilege in any private quarrel, and he defends his country and his life with such weapons as the tax-payer can be induced to provide. The expense of feeding, clothing, and transporting his person, doctoring his illness, curing his wounds, training his will, and arming his valour is much grudged by his nation who objects to him as a luxury in peace and offers him as a sacrifice in danger. Conscripted during a war by favour of his youth, but otherwise enlisted through pressure of his poverty, he is in all circumstances at the mercy of the country's sense of fair play in a bargain. Never the favourite of fortune, and not seldom the victim of fate, the service of a soldier demonstrates very clearly the

standard of living in his nation, if by the 'standard of living' is meant not merely eating, drinking, and gaining, but obeying, daring, and giving. And, as this demonstration is exhibited daily to their observant eyes, the women who live in a cantonment begin to realise with what deadly swiftness demoralisation might set in if, day by day, a right spirit were not renewed within each soldier, rendering him impervious to the subtle sedition of self-interest. This danger is necessarily more acute in a mercenary force such as the Indian Army.

Paul Graham, escorting his wife back to Peshawar—which place had sorely missed her charms—was very conscious of the difference between the standards authorised in a cantonment and the standards that established rule over potential recruit, and pensioner, in the district through which they rode to Chakwal. When an Indian officer on leave stopped them with a wayside petition Prudence felt a certain interest because the talk in the rest-house at Chuha Saidan Shah during the long fortnight she had spent there had enlightened her as to the tragedy, vivacity, and energy of the rural population, much as a book of travel may make the reader's mind familiar with pastures new. She watched her husband with a personal curiosity quickened by John's declaration that he had attracted Joyce.

"Sahib, I have a petition," said Jemadar Feroz Khan, saluting.

"Well, what is it?" enquired Paul, and halted.

"It concerns this girl and her mother," said the officer, and indicated a very small and pretty child cuddling close to the impenetrable disguise of her mother's spotless white burkha. She looked like a little chicken just emerged from under the mother hen's feathers. "Subadar Usuf Shah came to his

village on pension in 1919. He was a wounded man. Last month he died. There is very little land—nothing! The subadaree and the daughter should receive pensions.”

“There is no right to a pension,” said Paul. “Much land was given to soldiers as reward. Did the subadar receive no land?”

“No land, sahib,” replied Feroz Khan. “The subadar was but a jemadar when peace came. Afterwards many left and he was promoted subadar. Then his regiment was demobilised. Sahib, it is a hard case. The subadaree had much anxiety during the war. Her parents and her father-in-law are dead. The subadar’s mother is very old. There is this little girl and there will be her marriage to arrange. They hunger, sahib.” The emaciation of the silent widow was completely hidden from the Grahams by her burkha, completely hidden from the distant Government by the isolation of the plains.

“While he served the subadar received pay, while he lived he received pension. His death was not due to his service, therefore the Raj gives no pension to his family,” replied Paul formally. “That is well known to you, Jemadar Sahib.”

“Sahib, that is true but it is not right. The subadar gave much service. All through the war he fought. He had a good name. To-day if his mother and his daughter and his widow starve no one will say that it is right.”

“They will not starve,” asserted the British officer. “They will be supported by their relations according to the custom of your people. If the subadar had not been in the army and had died, would they have starved after his death? Never.”

“Nay, why should the Raj give to those who contribute no service? Without doubt the relations

give something to those who have not served in the army ; a very little they give, and to-day all things cost dear. But to those whose men have been soldiers they do not give willingly. All ask, 'Why does not the Raj give to you ?' I speak the truth, sahib."

"The devil of it is that he undoubtedly does," Paul said in English to his wife, then in the vernacular to the big jemadar he replied: "What can I do? You know the regulations. If I report the case the official reply will be that the subadar's family are not entitled to a pension. To support all the widows of soldiers would require heavy taxation, and you people would then cry out against the Government. Already the people of the Council give much trouble about the cost of an army."

"The subadar ate the King's salt ; those women-folk will hunger, sahib," the officer reiterated, very urgently. Whatever the logic of the position the sentiment of the case urged this Punjabi soldier to condemn the decision of the Government he served.

"Is the subadaree related to you ?" enquired Paul.

"She is the sister of my House,<sup>1</sup> huzoor," Feroz Khan replied. "I contribute what I can, but I have my family to support. My brother also is dead and his widow and children are upon my head. Sahib, a subadaree has honour ; it is an indignity that she should be as a beggar."

Pride spoke an intimate language to Paul Graham, who knew that a sepoy without martial pride was a sepoy without martial stamina. Here was a man who had enlisted in the ranks and been promoted ; a yeoman of the Jhelum district, typical of his race and class and creed, and voicing the thought of those

<sup>1</sup> Wife.

Punjabi officers who were the most influential body of Indians in the army. It was a dangerous discontent that saw to what straits a man's own wife and children might come, that felt the humiliation of the subadaree as a personal thing. The widow of a man who had defended the State could turn to no State aid for succour: and she could not work for hire because she was a veiled woman. Paul was guiltily conscious that in his regimental office he might have regarded the petitioner as the mere unfortunate author of a begging letter, whereas here in her illaqua, sombrely impressive in her obliteration behind thick white cloth, he discovered her in her high rank of peasant, most powerfully allied to an army upon whose fidelity depended the security of India and the peace of Asia. "This is no joke," swore Graham to himself. "I wonder how many there are of 'em in just such a plight."

The salient figure suddenly spoke; her deep-chested, raucous voice shattered any illusion that the burkha concealed a puny creature. "Memsahib!" she said, hailing Prudence with something of a stately challenge, "memsahib, the subadar was a wounded man. Of that wound he died."

It was the first time that the drama of the Indian Army had made a personal appeal to Prudence and she instantly took fire. "Salaam!" she cried to the veiled Punjabi, and added in her halting Urdu, "I am very sorry." Turning to Paul she indignantly said, "Can't you do anything?"

"If he died as a result of his wounds she is entitled to a pension. But I think she is trying it on," Paul told his wife. He addressed the jemadar again. "Where was the subadar wounded, and how?"

"In his lung, sahib, and at Loos. He was some time in hospital and some time at the depot. In

those days he was havildar. Then he was sent to a newly raised regiment as jemadar, having recovered from his wound. Perhaps he died of that wound. I do not know." Paul recognised that the jemadar would not risk his reputation by confirming an assertion which subsequent enquiry might disprove.

"I will take the subadaree's name and address and refer the matter to the civil authorities," Paul said, bringing forth his old note-book, but not very hopefully.

"Huzoor, what do the civil know?" growled the jemadar. "The sahib will tell the tehsildar to enquire. Perhaps the tehsildar will enquire. It is the village chaukidar<sup>1</sup> who reports the death. He reports it to the thana and it is then written down. But what does the chaukidar know of wounds?"

"He is not a fool, this fellow," thought Paul, with no great liking for him. Aloud he asked, "What name did the chaukidar give to the subadar's illness?"

The jemadar turned his overbearing face to his wife's sister and repeated the question. The motionless figure answered in the same strident accent, "The chaukidar said the subadar died of fever. He died of his wound. The chaukidar lied."

It was a queer story, Paul felt: the wound in France; the science of surgery at the Pavilion Hospital in Brighton, the convalescence in cantonments on light duty, the transfer to another battalion, demobilisation. Then home, and life beside an ancient mother, and that vigorous voice, and the baby girl. Death, and a rustic watchman—without knowledge and immune from penalty—pronouncing as to its cause. The probabilities were against the subadar having died from his wound. He might have had pneumonia and the wound perhaps had handicapped

<sup>1</sup> Watchman.



him in his struggle for life. As Paul, having made his notes, returned the book to his pocket he felt gloomily certain that the chaukidar had the last word in this tragedy of the Punjab plains.

"I must catch my train at Chakwal," said Paul to the jemadar. "Come on, Prudence."

But Prudence thrust her apathetic pony towards the widow. The Mahomedan woman had never ceased to devour with her eyes this revelation of a European wife. She had not beheld one till to-day. Seeing no beauty in Prudence's face, she yet found her interesting, perturbing. The subadar had seen many such in Europe. Feroz Khan gazed at her now, and she had addressed her sahib as an equal. They were as queens, these mem-log: unseemly queens. Forbidden by modesty to appeal to the British officer, she spoke again to Prudence: "Memsahib, salaam! The subadar's mother is old, and there is this little child. We shall die. The subadar was badly wounded: from that wound he died. Give justice! A pension is necessary, Protector of the poor."

For answer Prudence leant from the saddle and put her pale fingers out to the subadaree. She felt them grasped between two nervous and powerful hands. It was as though life itself held her, making its terrible demands.

"Alas! Alas!" said Prudence. "Do you understand? I am greatly grieved. Alas!"

For a moment the two women tarried there with joined hands, and the widow's voice of intrigue was silenced by this new relationship of personal touch. Then Prudence rode on, and the woman lifted the child in her arms and wearily trailed after Jemadar Feroz Khan towards her village to endure her hopeless dependence.

"It is not fair!" cried Prudence to Paul.

Paul growled, "It's all very difficult."

Prudence gave a little shudder. "I'll be glad to get away from the plains," she said. "I'm lost here."

It certainly was advantageous to have Paul as escort, Prudence decided, appreciative of his care for her comfort when, Chakwal station reached at length, he encountered argumentative coolies for her and tucked her on to the long sofa-like seat in their compartment. As the train rattled along she drowsily fell asleep.

The colourless earth stretched its unshaded levels on either side of this silent pair, the woman slumbering and the man watching her. In the third class carriages Indians talked unceasingly: they voiced the emphasis, the vivacities, the gossip, and the opinions, which no European hears. In all that long row of human beings swaying together to the movements of iron wheels Paul Graham had the most complete self-mastery, due to his race's deep-rooted sense of moral obligation. A Frenchman has written of this peculiarly British sense, "As long as it does persist, what a principle of *self-government* it is, what a corrective for a political system, the evident danger of which is the organised reign of individual appetites!" Paul, a very simple man, loved Kipling who sang of the Law, that great stimulant to man's will. To the deep hum of the metals Graham, looking out at India, muttered to himself words that to him were soul-stirring:

"Keep ye the law—be swift in all obedience—  
Clear the land of evil, drive the road and bridge the ford.  
Make ye sure to each his own  
That he reap where he has sown,  
By the peace among our peoples let men know we serve the Lord."

Some energy and justice there, goodness knows, thought Graham cheerfully. Once more he regarded

his disquieting wife and asked himself why she did not give allegiance to the really great things: devotion, duty. It was not that she was too lazy. You could not accuse her of apathy. But she did not care a hang about duty; did not feel its drive and urge and chivalry. Perhaps she lacked the true education and opportunity. Though she fancied herself not a little as a woman of the world—here Paul chuckled ruefully—she was never in the very heart of things where life's most sincere demands trouble the waters. What on earth did she understand of a subdivision such as her brother administered? The labour of a regiment in war or peace was unknown to her. Because he was not enriched by his professional work she thought it dull. Her imagination could not swing her up till she got a glimpse of the absolute values. She simply could not see the high romance of the perfectly straight practical life. He remembered her lack of response on one fatal occasion when he had quoted to her certain lines. He felt shy now at the recollection; shy and hot. But he said the verse to himself again for the sheer quick pleasure it gave him:

"They do not preach that their God will rouse them a little before the nuts work loose.

They do not teach that His pity allows them to leave their work when they damn well choose.

As in the thronged and lighted ways, so in the dark and the desert they stand

Wary and watchful all their days that their brethren's days may be long in the land."

Now if Prudence could get the hang of that idea, here in the dark and the desert; . . . but she was a slave to ennui. She was impatient, though the British are a patient people. It was freakish of her. Yet she did thirst for risk and adventure as do its young men of action—he'd say that for her. She

had that confounded thing a plan, instead of a principle. It was as disconcerting as a fellow soldier with a "stunt." However, if a woman choose to have a plan it was possible to outwit her. It safeguarded the British in India that they never plotted and therefore fell to no counter-plot. Unfortunately Prudence's plan was that of a deserter. She had courage for her own fate, sink or swim. She was without the loyalty to pull her weight in the boat. It seemed that she lacked in herself the power to supply her own need; she was corrupt with discontent. His wife, alas, had a distaste for the goods their mutual life supplied. Yet what had *she* made, what had *she* mastered? The inadequate and provoking creature would almost certainly ask him during the next hour, "What time is it?" though she had a watch on her wrist. She would, he'd lay any odds on it, enquire "What's the name of this station?" when she could read it as easily as he. Things like that stumped you when you thought about them. But she magnetised. You could not escape from the importance of that fact. He always wanted to know what she *felt*. To look at her was to have every emotion he possessed subtly influenced. Her hand, tucked now so confidently under her smooth young cheek, was not like anybody else's hand to him: it was of interest. That grace of hers, which appealed to him through every line of her healthy body, gave importance to each physical movement. How queer it was—the power she had to pain and to please him. When pleased it was an exquisite pleasure. And the pain? Love was a divine mystery with an immortal hope. He banked on that. You had to have a religion, to account for women, he thought. A man's action seemed all-important, and a woman's conduct. Confusedly he

saw with his mind's eye an angry man carrying war into the enemy's country, and an angry woman—well, just in a temper. This sleeping girl was a living thing one must not fight, and yet the answer was not peace. With the calm of mere observation he considered her a moment, and decided that without spiritual strength this wife of his could enchant but could not purify. It required immense power to purify; to purify the heart and mind. He was not entitled to demand it of her, yet he craved it: as a blessing, which is so much greater than mere well-wishing. It fairly staggered him that a woman like Prudence could repudiate their *marriage*. Had he a very limited insight into character? He admitted that he could only understand the individualist who claimed a right to do his duty as his conscience conceived it. There was no other individual right. Even a conscientious objector was a righteous sort of swine, Paul thought, so long as he did not consent ultimately to profit by the victory he had refused to achieve. Now if Prudence considered marriage *wrong*—but she did not. She merely found the one she had made unsatisfactory. The pity of it! If only she would buck up and try to make the best of things. He was achingly sorry for her. He could not give her much. But she was not condemned by circumstances to forgo the vital enjoyment of a thing well done. She did not even take *real* pains to improve her service at tennis. He must find the way to help her, somehow. They could not go on for long like this. He was never indifferent to her, never—and it wore him out. He had to turn his mind from the emotional side of the problem or he would rage, simply rage. She must be protected; against herself if necessary. Paul reacted to the old moral law of his race and class; the stronger

must help the weaker, thus levelling things up. It was the great obligation implicit in any belief in the communion of souls, which faith Paul held in a very spirited manner. Your non-co-operator was a mere dead weight, and the sooner dead the better in his eyes. As he thus mused, every thought influencing his future actions, the flaming sun fell down behind the rim of the world.

Prudence woke at last and gazed out of the window into the thin film of brief twilight. A camel stretched its grotesque neck to feed upon a thorn-tree; a religious mendicant in saffron robes, his narrow forehead smeared with ashes, and followed by a disciple who looked imbecile, moved with appalling calm towards a distant squat village. She disliked the view exceedingly. She might not know England with any precision, but she wanted it. Her eyes ached for it. The sea dancing and rejoicing round its coast, the winds blustering over it, the golden-haired babies so absurdly and persistently renewing its population, like buttercups filling a meadow. What a vision!

She turned towards Paul, and, lying still, held out her hand to him. Its wedding-ring caught the light and burned in his sight.

"Paul, I'm homesick!" she cried.

"My poor darling," he responded, and locked her hand in his.

Judging from the way she half laughed at him quite tenderly, under her long eye-lashes, he had done the right thing this time.

"You don't often say nice things like that," Prudence murmured.

"I will though," he announced firmly. And added, "I didn't know you wanted me to."

"How like a man!" commented his wife. She

was trying to see him with Joyce's eyes. Why did he attract Joyce? He had a strong head and form, but John was incomparably better-looking. Paul gave one the idea of big reserves. That was rather intriguing. "Do you like Joyce?" she languidly enquired.

"Yes, awfully," said Paul.

"Why?" she persisted.

"She is the sort of woman I like," he replied without being illuminating.

"She is quite different from me," Prudence remarked.

"I don't *like* you," he explained.

"Love me?" enquired the vain female.

He nodded. Love was a very difficult word to utter, he found.

"Stupid of you," she smiled. "Such a waste of time. I'm horrid really. You should hear brother John's opinion of me."

"Tastes differ," Paul said.

"Yes. Yours and mine are never the same. You like India, and I *loathe* it."

"It's not a bad place for a soldier even now. We are useful here." His words and tone suggested that he and she naturally differed in this matter.

"The White Man's Burden? Oh you and your old Kipling, I know you! My dear, he is hopelessly a back number."

"Soldiers are out of fashion, too," Paul admitted with a broad grin. "I don't care a jot. I know what I like."

"So do I," Prudence retorted quickly. "But you won't let me have it. You don't realise that financially I am as dependent as that wretched Mahomedan woman. And some day I may be as hard put to it

as she is. Rules and regulations refuse her aid ; customs frustrate her. You want the law of marriage to defeat me just like that."

He frowned in silence for a moment, holding her hand which she had left in his. She had always enjoyed Paul's touch ; so firm, so modest, and so purposeful. Then he said : " You've got it into your silly head that a woman can't be happy, or free, unless she is rich. I'd revel in being a rich man at this moment. But I've often been as jolly as a sand-boy without tuppence. Your theory is a lie as far as my experience goes."

" Then why does everyone desire wealth ? " she demanded.

" Does everyone ? I do when I'm in a funk about bills and things. But being rich is not the only, or the certain way, of being happy. Not by a long shot," he urged.

" It is more certain than most," Prudence retorted. " I'd like to give it a trial. Poverty frightens me. And you are not in a position to save me from it."

Beads stood out upon his forehead. This was a torturing business, he thought.

" Fear is a beastly thing," he said in fine sympathy. " I often felt it during the war."

She scrutinised his frank, disciplined face. Yes, he had gone through a lot, and he had not fought for his own hand. What a mean little wretch she was to him ! Deep, deep down in her she could not sustain an enmity to this man. " Poor old Paul," she whispered softly.

" I'm all right," he instinctively declared.

The train halted. Voices broke in through the open windows. A tiny platform held figures moving in a dim light. Beyond its lamps there was a great darkness.



"What is the name of this station?" asked Prudence.

"Jatli," Paul answered. He added: "It is seven o'clock. By this time to-morrow we'll be back in cantonments."

"A different world," said the woman gladly.

Paul watched a young sepoy throw his bundle into the train, embrace his father's knees, and struggle for a place in a third-class carriage.

"A distant relation, that's all," said he.

The love which to one and one only has reference  
Seems terribly like what perhaps gains God's preference.  
BROWNING.

PRUDENCE entertained her friends in Peshawar with a spirited account of her sojourn in the wilderness. "Not a *thing* to do!" she declared. "I can't imagine how my sister-in-law endures it. John, no doubt, is ruling perfectly splendidly, but all I can tell you is that, so far as I could see, his wonderful district is hardly aware in ordinary daily life that we exist. He, and Paul, were called in like doctors when anything ailed the people, but neither of them had much power to put things right. John is dreadfully good-looking and snubbed me like mad. I survived, as you see."

"So you don't think much of the British Raj?" said Dick Davis cheerfully.

"I don't think about it at all, my good child," retorted Prudence. "I leave all patriotic fervour to Paul. He gets any amount of pleasure out of England being great. I'd get far more out of Paul being rich. I have a sordid mind."

"I find it quite easy to forgive you," Warwick murmured.

Prudence pirouetted on the points of her toes before them in the verandah, while the green parrots flew close to the bungalow with raucous cries. "Distance makes the heart grow fonder: you both adore me because I have been away. After I have

been here three weeks we shall calm down again. That is so unsatisfactory. By this time I know exactly what will happen. Now we are very keen about each other and for a while the temperature of our emotions will rise and rise and rise." She traced an ascent in the air with an extended arm, and pointed finger, her face raised, and her slim body poised on tip-toe. "Then because I'm such a good wife and my name is Prudence the atmosphere will become pure and cold." She joined her hands as in the attitude of prayer, her mocking eyes looking up unabashed. "You two will grow critical, and bored. Then Dick will consult me about some nice girl he wants to marry, and Ronny will bid me a beautiful good-bye, return home, and go straight to the devil with a duchess." She relaxed, stretched wearily, and dropped into a wicker chair. "So I can't think why I bother about you at all," she grumbled.

"Because Satan finds mischief for your idle hands, we suffer," Warwick lazily drawled. "You lead us on, and then tell us off. Doesn't she, Dick?"

"I sha'n't consult you about that girl; don't you worry," remarked Dick. "It's very doubtful whether you are a good judge of girls, Mistress Prue. Anyhow, let's get on with the rise in temperature; it is an exhilarating prospect."

"It makes me feel quite feverishly excited," Warwick said. "What do we do next?"

But Prudence spread her hands in front of her and considered them. "Idle? That's not my fault. They are itching to claw things." She curled her fingers. "Nasty greedy creatures. Well, they possess Paul to have and to hold from henceforth. That's a handful for you! I can't manage him in

the least. You remember what I told you at the garden party, Dick? It is all off. Completely off. Paul won't hear of it."

"Stout fellow," muttered kindly Dick, rather embarrassed.

"It is an unspeakable relief to Ronny, who doesn't like his friends to get divorced. He thinks it's crude and careless of them. But the world is waxing impatient and doesn't see why it should be careworn over bad bargains, Ronny. You are old-fashioned and rather fussy." Prudence was in a strange mood.

Warwick flushed and laughed awkwardly. "On the contrary, I'm disappointed in you. I thought you were really going to do something terrific. This is very tame."

"Yes—as tame as all wild oats. The only really wild thing is love. Perhaps I haven't got a heart," she retorted.

"Women are so fond of saying that," complained Dick. "I'd as soon be without a toothbrush. I shouldn't boast of the lack, I assure you."

"I drivel and frivol because there is nothing else to do," groaned Prudence. "Suggest something for me to do, Ronny."

"You wouldn't do it," he replied mysteriously. "But there is a course you might let me take." He lifted her listless hand and kissed it.

"Here!" said Dick as though startled, "the temperature is lower in the shade this side. Change with me."

Whereupon Prudence laughed and her laughter seemed to turn all human vitality into a madcap's energy, it was so reckless and so merry. Then Dick took himself off on his bicycle. There was something about his fair, close-cropped head, his jolly freckled

face, his hard-worn tweed coat and his unpretentious old "bike" that held a very special place in the regard of Peshawar. Much of the Trenchs' popularity was due to his genuine goodfellowship with everyone in cantonments.

"Dick's a dear, isn't he?" said Prudence.

"Funny thing that his parents should have put him into the army, where he can't make a bob," was Warwick's reply. "Quite useful to the army, but rather unfortunate for himself, I should have thought. He is cut out for matrimony. However, he'll probably marry some penniless damsel and have a nursery full of little Dicks in no time. He'll still cling to that tweed coat and scorch about on his infernal old boneshaker, and his wife will wear durzie-made clothes and an ayah will trail round after their kids. Well, if he doesn't mind, I'm sure I don't."

Prudence winced. Alert, she thought, "Dick is no poorer than Paul." Her mind's eye pictured herself in a durzie-made frock that was all wrong; she saw the unending makeshifts of a small income. From such a stage how could she dominate her world? A beautiful woman had an urge within her and encountered a special emotion in others, such as feminine creatures without loveliness never felt, never met. She was impelled to shine, she was invited to adorn. And she could not be passive like a flower. Just to receive admiration was not enough: she desired it as a means, not as an end. But it intensified her individuality, made her conscious of being an exception to the rule. What was she to do with her gift of beauty? She thought, "Plain women are truly loved. I possess no advantage there. Good looks are an introduction to—what?"

"A penny for your thoughts?" enquired Warwick.

"I'm as poor as Dick's wife would be," she answered in a sullen tone.

"You ought to have married a millionaire. Why didn't you?" he said idly.

Prudence shrugged impatient shoulders. "I never met any. Besides, I did not start by wanting everything at once. I grow increasingly appreciative and increasingly eager for the good things that are withheld by fate."

He looked at her small face and the perfection of her eyes, so darkly and seductively shadowed by long black lashes. The intricate delicacy of a butterfly's wings was not more exquisite. There was a daintiness in the whiteness of her throat, and the whiteness of her little straight nose, that touched perfection. Her lips might move to anger or to mirth, to yield or to deny; they still retained their subtle fascination. Passion and fastidiousness alike desired to pursue the wonder of her loveliness. Its power endangered him, he knew; and all his worldly-wise caution strove to resist it. "You don't make the most of things, Prudence," he said. "You are a cold little queen, and you miss a lot." He took her hand and tightened his grip on it. "That means nothing to you," he said.

"Not much," she answered. He dropped her slim fingers and she kept her own counsel. Inwardly she admitted that Warwick had for her merely the attraction of his possessions and his attitude towards them—that of a master, for whom only the best was good enough. His expression of rank and wealth influenced her also: it was at once unostentatious and definite. He attached supreme importance to such things and never cheapened them by mere

display. She appreciated that. But emotionally he was quite insignificant to her compared with penniless Paul.

Suddenly Prudence sprang to her feet and bolted into the bungalow. She made a violent signal to Warwick to follow her. He did so, and saw her fly through the house to the back verandah where he could hear her imperious voice commanding a servant to say she was out. As she stole back to him, her finger on her lips, a piercing feminine voice called "Qui hai."

Prudence remained cautiously rigid while the *khitmutgar* strove to convince the unwelcome visitor that his mistress was not at home, and Warwick entertained an unpleasant suspicion lest Prudence was animated by a fear of being caught *tête-à-tête* with him. Such an exaggeration would be distasteful. To his relief Prudence signified her complete satisfaction at the departure of her guest by letting her little pink tongue peep out at her retreating form. "It is Mrs. Thorn, and she runs a rapture for me," she explained. "That is the sort of silly thing which gets on my nerves. When she wrote to me a note beginning, 'You perfect person,' and I replied, 'Dear Mrs. Thorn,' she felt herself entitled to an explanation, forsooth! I explained all right and she wept and tried to kiss me. I do hate slaves."

"Prudence, tell me honestly," he urged, angrily conscious of his keen anxiety as to her answer, "what do you care about beside money and position?"

"I care for the mental effort and competition of obtaining them. And I care for some people—well, more than others." And then she made an irritable gesture. "Oh, goodness knows! I detest being

bored, being inert. But of late I have felt that beyond my scale of values there may be precious things." Her face took on a look of strain and wonder. "Suppose holiness *is*—not power and glory and what delights the senses—but holiness? Neither cheap nor dear; priceless. Certainly a mystery surrounds all the things of the spirit. I dislike the cocksure religious people who have got it all pat at their fingers' ends: they put me off making any further voyage of discovery. I leave it at that—a mystery. And my imagination is sufficiently pre-occupied by the good things of this world. I want them. Yet sometimes I have a horrid doubt as to their power to satisfy me. I have some education and much energy, but am not permitted to embark on any enterprise. If I expend myself in the pursuit of pleasure it is all spoilt for me by the fact that, for lack of money, I am ill-equipped and at a disadvantage."

"You are quite adorable," he told her, "but, as you admit, quite heartless."

"All the better for you," she retorted recklessly.

"No," he answered. He said it so definitely that she looked at him in full enquiry. In a flash she anticipated his carrying her off through the divorce court, to his big place in Shropshire, to the stirring business of living down a scandal and fighting her social battle. She would win of course, and magnificently. London would be at her feet. For a second she created her own image faultlessly dressed and jewelled. "Ah! I am here in Peshawar to be bought, am I?" she told herself, ferociously scornful.

Prudence had lost sight of the fact that Ronald Warwick was as worldly as herself and more of a disciplined connoisseur. For a wife he was deter-



mined to possess a woman of great distinction besides personal charm. He discriminated against beauty tarnished by scandal and needy poverty, and possessing no special social prestige. Though he knew that he could not be the lover of Prudence Graham except at the price of matrimony, he would not accept those terms. Neither would he forgo something of a surrender: her complete independence was unbearable to him. "No," he repeated quickly to that ominous question in her eyes, "I hate you to be heartless. I want your friendship more than anything else in the world."

She instantly saw the whole situation as it was. "It takes two to make a bargain!" her silent tongue jeered woundingly to her pride. Then, because the matter seemed too ugly to leave untransformed, she proceeded to idealise it with all the swiftness of a movement to recover lost balance. Propping her chin with her hand she asked very seriously, "What is your idea of friendship?" She was almost demure.

Warwick replied slowly: "The thing is creative—you *make* a friend. You can more easily make a great mistake, of course! It is not a physical relationship, and one should have the capacity for giving companionship and affection to many friends. There is not the queer exclusion of marriage—'Forsaking all others.'"

She held him with a long dark look. "A tepid thing? A safe pastime perhaps."

"Not at all safe between you and me," he replied quietly.

That most successfully attracted her. "A freedom, but dangerous. I like that. No ridiculous laws as in marriage. No monopoly. I detest being monopolised by anyone. It makes me wriggle,"

she moved her shoulders furiously and smiled at him.

"A friend should be a thing of fire," he said. "Very faithful in trouble and enthusiastic in success. You are such a glowing creature, you'd make an ideal friend."

"You want to play with fire then?" quoth she.

"Of course," he answered. But since that was not quite to his liking, he added: "There is a worldly wisdom in friendship which is far superior to the sentimentality of lovers. I knew a woman once who was amazingly artistic in her friendships: her affinities were always of interest, touched by imagination and deliciously restrained. I never knew her to wear a friendship out."

Prudence remarked doubtfully: "So there are rules in your friendships. Tiresome conventions?"

He laughed. "The laws of diplomacy, my dear. Friendship is a high alliance, one doesn't turn it into a tomboy's game of hide-and-seek."

Under the influence of her belief that Ronald Warwick always impersonated the standards of the *élite* Prudence forbore to contradict him. She simply rebelled. "As a friend I should disregard Mrs. Grundy," she announced.

"If you have a true genius for friendship that is unnecessary," he hastily asserted. "The woman I was speaking of never offended the susceptibilities of society. Instead of jostling she led."

Prudence blew a little ghostly puff of cigarette smoke into the air and watched it as one who examined unsubstantial fantasy. "Ronald, I suspect that you always choose a leader who would take you down a *cul-de-sac*. A stuffy, safe *cul-de-sac*. Thus far and no farther is the motto of your friendship."

"And yours is——?" he enquired curtly.

She shook her head. "Find out," she retorted.

He rose to take his leave of her. "With your permission I'll endeavour to discover," he told her.

"I'm not very natural with you, you know," she blurted out. "You'll mistake experiment for proof."

"Darling," he exclaimed, and was gratified to note that the word rather staggered her, "you are so beautiful that I never expect you to be true."

Prudence received this affection in a blunt silence, but neither his excellent tailor's art nor his handsome pony's price was lost on her as he rode off.

The interview left her unaccountably weary. It had been much ado about nothing. She saw the woman that she was as a romantic robber, raider, or gambler, who wanted desirable things to pass into her hands. But it shocked her to find that she had been willing to vilely cheapen herself. That had been a hideous moment when she had offered no resistance to the prospect of selling Prudence Graham to Ronald Warwick. Perhaps if it had come to the point she would have been incapable of that. She wondered. Curiously enough she recognised Ronald's attitude in the matter without spite. She understood his scale of values very well; too well.

Paul's scale of values, on the other hand, was as odd to her as an astronomer's. 'Paul's rather mad,' she said to herself. He was coming through the gate now: a soldierly figure in his khaki. She knew that he would notice that the mignonette was out; suddenly, in a cloud of fragrance, it had arrived at perfection that morning. He stopped at once and then shouted to her in great pleasure, "Hi! have you seen the mignonette is out?" She nodded, and

he was content. The fox terrier rushed forth to greet him in a scatter of dust and Paul held a stick low for him to jump over once or twice, and then gave his beloved cocker spaniel a show by making her go to heel, her virtuous obedience outshining the vanity of the terrier, who wanted to display himself jumping over sticks for ever. Prudence could see quite well that Paul was completely satisfied by the garden. It interested and delighted him. There might be more fashionable worlds to conquer, but for the moment the prospect lured him as little as an advertisement proclaiming the dizzy charms of the Riviera.

He approached her leisurely, withheld by the enthralling performances of the busy garden. The Peshawar vale was at the very point of greeting its flower-laden spring. The land was saturated with sunshine ; its dust lay warm and light, buds swelled. There was a sense of an ardent circulation, of quickening pressure, of an awaited increase. Presently the eye would behold abundance where now there was space. The borders would be crowded with colour and scent and form ; trees and flowering shrubs would extend themselves in leaves and blossoms ; there would be the added movements of things that danced and swayed, the added sounds of things that rustled ; new shadows and fresh spells. Soon great thunderstorms would announce violent stress, and the sun would burn the air, and the moon seem icy by contrast, and all the birds would make wild love. It was not in the least akin to an English spring with its ghost-like frosts, grey skies flecked with blue, soft wet winds, prim snowdrops and moist earth. Here in the East the sun kissed the earth passionately upon her parched lips. Paul, eagerly anticipating the zealous acts of nature, was as con-

scious of the delights in store as his wife was of the too expensive contents of Bond Street shops, which would soon reveal the spring fashions to other eyes than hers.

"I'm playing golf this afternoon. What are you up to?" Paul enquired at last.

"Tennis and then bridge at the Club," she replied. "And don't forget that we dine at Flagstaff House to-night."

That considerably damped Paul's spirits. "If there is one thing I hate it is dining with a general," he remarked gloomily.

"I can't see any difference between a general and an ordinary human being," said Prudence loftily.

"Well, I shall have to wear a white tie for one thing," he absurdly complained.

When he emerged from the bungalow ready for his game of golf he looked as though he had not a care in the world. Young Forbes of his regiment called for him on a motor-bicycle. The boy addressed Prudence rather shyly: she was altogether too formidable for him to desire much of her company, but to encounter her ranked as a thrilling experience.

Prudence had a profound antipathy to motor-bicycles, but knew that Paul yearned to possess one. "You are going home on eight months' leave, so I suppose you'll have to sell that monster?" she remarked.

"Rather!" said young Forbes. "I owe every penny I shall get for it. And there is a slump, worse luck. I have had a notice up in the Club for three weeks and not one decent offer. Any amount of Indians are after it, but my orderly flings them all out as they want it for nothing. However, I almost struck a bargain with one sportsman this morning.

He is a Pathan ; a durzie in the city. I very nearly screwed him up to my lowest price and if he'll throw in four pyjamas as well—I simply must have them for the voyage—I may have to sell it to him. Ready, Graham ? Right-oh." The two officers disappeared after a series of alarming explosions in a cloud of dust.

Prudence stood and watched them, hostile to noise, smell, and the grit thrown in her eyes. Sher Khan, the bearer, passed her on the way to his tiny dark room in the servants' quarters, and she pointed to the vanishing motor and said, "It is not good."

"Nay, huzoor," said the grave man. "It is very good. It cost much money."

"It makes much noise and smell," she protested.

"Undoubtedly. But it is very pleasing to the sahiblog. The Captain Sahib should possess one," he replied.

"We have not enough rupees," Prudence answered.

"Your honour's rupees are many," the servant rejoined respectfully. "The sahiblog possess all things." With which empty compliment he retired noiselessly.

Later the Grahams bumped up to the Trenches' bungalow in a hired tonga. "Come away as early as you can," said Paul. It was his invariable request when they went to a party.

"You don't suppose it will be I who makes the move, do you ?" retorted Prudence.

Prudence entered Flagstaff House eagerly. She had decided to cherish friendship as an ardent personal adventure, free from other people's notions and restrictions. The General and Dick were her friends, so with them she would behave exactly as she pleased.

And it pleased her to call out, "Hullo, beloved Dick," when she greeted him on the verandah, and to give Sir Thomas Trench both her hands when he advanced to meet her. But to her hostess and to Colonel and Mrs. Best she was merely civil. Formal, peevish Mrs. Best had long considered her a sore trial and frequently expressed the wish that nice Captain Graham had married the right kind of wife. Colonel Best had agreed with her, and ominously prophesied that Graham would find he had handicapped himself. Yet Colonel Best weakly joined the General on the hearthrug where Prudence stood and smiled up at him. Sir Thomas made a great fuss over welcoming Mrs. Graham back to Peshawar, and meek Mrs. Best wondered if Lady Trench *quite* liked it. Lady Trench painfully hated it, but her gracious manner and calm face gave no hint of displeasure.

It proved to be a luckless festivity. Eleanor Trench took social matters quite seriously and was vexed. She had invited Colonel and Mrs. Best because she was confident that the commanding officer of an Indian regiment would know how 'to treat natives,' and to meet them she had bidden Lieutenant Kartar Singh and his wife. The youthful Sikh had been educated at Sandhurst and received a King's commission. His wife had recently learnt to speak English and was out of purdah. They had just arrived in Peshawar on Kartar Singh's appointment to an Indian cavalry regiment and Eleanor had asked them to dine rather sooner than she would have bidden a British subaltern and his wife in order to emphasise her lack of racial prejudices, which she preserved intact. The General on hearing of the Grahams' return had extended to them a verbal invitation. Lady Trench doubted Prudence's discretion in the

presence of a Sikh wife, and had not welcomed this addition to her dinner party. She hoped her husband would cease to flirt with Mrs. Graham in that idiotic and careless way of his on the arrival of the Indians. In Kartar Singh's eyes such conduct must seem at least undignified. The worst of it lay in the fact that it was characteristic of Thomas, which stung his sincere wife sharply. The door opened to admit the Sikhs.

Kartar Singh was a thin, well-bred fellow who appeared energetic, and was rather short-sighted and idle. He wore mess kit and a puggaree, being the only man in uniform. His hair was as long as a woman's, but was twisted up in a knot and hidden under the smooth khaki folds of his turban which also hid the comb his caste required him to wear. His beard was immature but unshaven. An iron bracelet circled his wrist. His short dagger was concealed, and in respect of all those matters enjoined by Guru Gobind Singh upon the orthodox he was a faithful member of the Khalsa. His wife was fairer than he and of the more typical burly Sikh build: her mild brown eyes were set in a wide low brow, her dazzling white teeth beautified a broad mouth. She looked stupid, modest and strong, and she entered the room a few paces behind her husband and then stood fidgeting with the edge of her embroidered red sari. The pleated skirt and the loose tunic which she wore were of handsome materials and in her blunt straight nose there was a jewelled stud while the lobes of her ears were weighed down by immense earrings of silver and turquoise. Her arms were covered for twelve inches by glass bangles of many colours. This was her first dinner party, and to all her panic-stricken pleadings to be permitted to absent herself at the last moment, on plea of sudden illness, her well-



disciplined lord had made a stern refusal. It was strange to be welcomed as 'Mrs. Kartar Singh' by her hostess, since she herself might never utter her husband's name. He had sworn to her that the menu would not include beef, but the knowledge that it was often consumed in this house penetrated her in waves of horror. There was social ease in the fact that Colonel Best did not insist upon shaking her stiff little hand but, with his own two pressed courteously together, acknowledged the introduction to her with the blessed greeting, 'Sat siri kal.' All the Englishwomen in turn talked to the Indian officer about polo as a perfectly safe subject. He addressed each as 'Madam,' and spoke in clipped syllables. Kartar Singh was very happy, though bashful.

Prudence examined this married pair with curiosity. Probably the woman's purdah had never been strict; caste and custom however must have fostered ideas and instincts now ruthlessly driven to foreign ground. To her the British rule had meant ultimately this—that she, a Hindu, fed with European Christians, waited upon by Mahomedan servants of the Punjab; that she 'went into dinner' with the precedence of a lieutenant's wife in an official society, her hand resting on the arm of an English officer; that she exerted an influence in the room which forced the men into an impersonal attitude towards all the women present. Chaff and gossip, religion and politics, lay stricken dumb in their western minds. And that thick head with its sleek hair knew nothing of art or adventure. What in their wide world could they talk to her about?

Mrs. Best asked her if she had any children, and she replied that she had one son. "He will have to be a soldier like his father," the excellent British

matron said, at no loss as to how to improve the occasion.

"He is very small now and he has many pains in his stomach," the Sikh mother told them. "I think Peshawar is too cold for him, but his father says always that it is all right." She looked towards Prudence as she had done again and again because she was young. The others were old women surely. "You have children?" she asked.

"No," said Prudence. The question and answer were given clearly across the drawing-room just as a silence had fallen. Mrs. Best secretly hoped Mrs. Graham felt ashamed of herself.

The sound of a motor coming up the drive puzzled Lady Trench, who saw by the clock that it lacked but one minute to the dinner hour. "Aren't we all here?" she asked Dick in a low voice.

"Yes," he said, counting heads swiftly.

"You had better see——" she suggested and he slipped out.

He returned guilty and flushed. By some appalling blunder the Crofts, carefully invited for to-morrow, had muddled the date and come to-night. Eleanor Trench's lips tightened in displeasure but she merely acknowledged his flustered explanation with a curt "Never mind now," and advanced to meet the unbidden guests: a middle-sized slightly grey man in the Indian Civil Service and his tall well-groomed wife. The General raised his eyebrows at Lady Trench. This was a bad mistake of hers, he thought. Though he had told her that of course they must entertain a senior official and his wife, and ignore the fact that the latter was divorced by her former husband—a major in a British cavalry regiment stationed in the south of India—he could not imagine why she had invited them to meet a

Hindu woman to whom such a feminine history was anathema.

"Tom, will you take Mrs. Croft in to dinner?" said Eleanor's cool voice.

"This rather puts the lid on it," thought Trench to himself, as he led the way with the naughty lady, followed by Mrs. Best with the gay Lothario—he did not look the part—while Kartar Singh and Paul Graham exchanged wives and Colonel Best, his face very critical, gave his arm to his hostess. Davis, in disgrace, brought up the rear.

To the Sikh girl the memsahib who sat on the General sahib's right and preceded the other ladies into the room was undoubtedly honoured above the rest. Nor was the scandal unknown to her, as Lady Trench prettily hoped. All gossip regarding British officers and officials came to her ears through her whispering household. She concluded that Englishwomen saw no disgrace in this thing. It was permissible to be the mem of first one sahib and then another. This eighteen-year-old girl, whose great-grandmother and all her predecessors had burnt to death if widowed, disdained such laxity. If Kartar Singh died she might marry his brother, but none other. Very shy of Graham sahib, she answered his one inevitable question as to where she was going for the hot weather by murmuring, "Ludhiana," unmindful of her husband's injunctions to "reply more than one word at a time." It was impossible to think of more than one thing at a time, and her eastern mind, like an extending shadow, edged ever towards the strange doings of Mrs. Croft.

Mrs. Croft easily held ascendancy over all their thoughts, for in the presence of Indian guests the others felt representative of British social ideals of which Mrs. Croft furnished an unfortunate example.

She was a pale, dark woman and very thin. Her colourless face wore a compressed look of strain. Everything about her seemed tightly strung: her form appeared drawn up tensely, and her hair sprang like unrelaxing wires from her brow, and there was tension in her set mouth. But her quick *savoir faire* was supreme. She held the General easily in conversation, speaking in a low voice. None of the company existed for her emotionally: they were fish out of water, and she moved restlessly at a great depth among mysterious tides.

Prudence left Dick to entertain Kartar Singh, though she turned to him courteously every now and then and offered some brief commonplace remark. She could not dissociate him and his wife from the great plains and little villages she had so recently beheld: an incomprehensible world of strange thoughts and odd dignities; of compulsions and restrictions so alien that they made the Sikh woman sitting opposite her now bear the character of a spell-bound creature in her eyes, as though a witchcraft were at work in all Punjab minds.

The nerves of Harold Croft were bleaching like his hair; the hot blood receding from them. He had been essentially a conventional man until Isabella Grey had swept him beyond the control of rules. This, their first social event in India since their marriage, was an ordeal to him which no charity could modify. He shrank from the palliation of broad minds and the welcome of dissolute ones. A younger man might have taken the whole affair as a matter of course in a modern world of go-as-you-please, but Croft had offended against his own precise code. As for Mrs. Best—who was boring him as all feminine beings did now, lacking Isabella's intense force of seduction—she was stupefied with bewilder-

ment as to how such a nice quiet man could have looted Major Grey's home so ruthlessly. Long ago she had met Major Grey and thought him nice too. You never could tell. She was glad, however, that Molly's late governess could not see her making herself so agreeable to this Mr. Croft, for in her dealings with that young person she had given expression to her outraged sentiments in very plain language. When she wrote, the girl had not married Major Smith and was not his wife. No doubt the pronouncement of the words "till death us do part," by Mrs. Croft for the second time did make a magic difference, though you could but die once.

It was a dull, silent party Lady Trench admitted, and it was almost a relief when two frozen meringues sprang from two plates and burst into cream and crumbs across the table. "Mine too!" cried Graham's voice encouragingly. Then: "I'm so sorry, Lady Trench."

"And I am very sorry also," said the Sikh girl, all relieved smiles to find that everyone made merry. "Mine was the first to go."

"But mine was the longest shot," Paul declared. Poor little devil, she had been in suppressed agonies all through dinner over the puzzle of knives and forks, and when disaster overtook her meringue and spoon he had not delayed an instant to "save her face."

When the women left the room the men settled down with relief to talk sport. The startling difference between the veiled and unveiled, divorced and discreet, faded with the departure of these fantastic creatures in their sheath-like silken garments, nose-rings or ear-rings, jewelled hands, feather fans, and reddened lips.

In the drawing-room Prudence listened gloomily to

Eleanor Trench and Mrs. Croft speaking of unattainable delights. The Crofts had arrived from Europe by the last mail and she touched on Ascot and Goodwood, spoke of dancing at Claridges, was almost expansive about the pleasures of fishing and shooting in Scotland. She and Lady Trench delicately exchanged the names of common friends, the latter avoiding all questions. They discussed Paris shops with the intimacy of experts, and Lady Trench showed deference to Mrs. Croft's expensive taste. Prudence angrily asked herself what she had gained by respecting the letter of the law; and what Mrs. Croft had lost—that mattered?

Trench joined Prudence on a sofa directly he entered the room. His wife instantly wished that he would display a less intimate and more formal interest in Mrs. Graham to-night. Prudence, her dark eyes starry, eagerly poured out to him her new enthusiasm for friendship. She found him most responsive. "I think," said Prudence, "that I have it in me to be a great friend."

"Would you be very tender-hearted?" he asked.

Her smile danced at him. "Sometimes," she delightfully declared. "But I'd let off steam, tilt at every wind-mill, cross each Rubicon, share all the fun. I'd go in the opposite direction to Mrs. Croft. I want friends, not lovers."

"You demand miracles," he told her. "You'll find discipline just where you think you've outwitted the will of the world. And none can go fancy-free for long if they risk adventure."

"Don't you think friendship is possible then?" she murmured.

"Certainly *if* people play the game and strictly keep the rules," the General said.

"Rules again!" she cried dismayed. But she

would not at once relinquish this recently realised value. She saw in friends an acquisition of strength, aid, interest; and of a certain independence if they would but back her up. So she added: "Well, never mind about rules; rules are for ever changing. You do believe in the spirit of friendship, don't you?"

To which he answered unexpectedly, "We should possess it. If you European women could demonstrate its purity to the Asiatic the veil would be rent and the purdah system would not be needed." He looked with whimsical kindness at his other guests gathered round the fire. "Mrs. Croft and Mrs. Kartar Singh make a strange pair, don't they? It's a pity about the Crofts. That sort of thing gives us a bad name out here. Graham and Kartar Singh are a contrast too. Nothing to prevent Kartar Singh having several wives."

Prudence leant forward and listened. "They are discussing the meaning of names," she said.

"A safe subject," the General remarked. They heard Mrs. Best explain to Kartar Singh that she was named after a flower. "A lily—white, you know."

"I don't know what my Christian name means," said Paul.

"What is yours?" Dick asked Mrs. Croft, just for something to say.

"Isabella, which signifies worshipper of God," she answered in strange accents.

"Oh, that is a beautiful name," cried the Sikh woman.

The General said in a low voice to Prudence: "She's a deep one, Mrs. Croft." He thought that Prudence had a frank air of innocence compared with the older woman. When the party broke up he

stood bare-headed under the moon to bid her farewell. "Good night, dear little friend," he murmured into her ear.

Her clear call rang out along the drive as she waved to Captain Davis: "*Au revoir*, Dick dearest."

"You are very affectionate all of a sudden," Paul growled sleepily. "What's this new stunt?"

"I shall call my friends what I please," his wife replied loftily.

"By all means, Mrs. Graham," said Paul.

She would have felt in high spirits that night if it had not been for the lurking recollection of something too humiliating to endure memory's record. A moment when she had valued, not merely the material world, but herself, at a market price. And yet, and yet—— Harold Croft, a Sessions Judge, had probably paid damages to Major Grey for the loss of Isabella his wife. Each widow afar in the Salt Range claimed rupees in compensation for a husband's death. Great civilised European nations demanded reparations for the blood spilt, homes burnt, women outraged, men led captive. Had not everything its price? She desired riches with all the energy of her mind, but henceforth she would combine the love of wealth with the love of friends because her ardent temperament craved the emotions of the heart, wild, interesting, absorbing experiences of palpitating life. A jolt of the tonga threw her against Paul's old poshteen; she leant close to his broad shoulder for a moment, but he took no notice. The top of the tonga rocked backwards and forwards across a thousand stars. The sky seemed terribly impersonal and Paul definitely reserved.

"You are not very friendly, I must say," Prudence cried to him.



His answer came like the spurt of the match he struck, inflaming his face and making it spring red and fierce out of the darkness.

“*Friendly!* Good God—I should think not.” And then in a low mutter, “One of a dozen friends, indeed!”

“It is all or nothing with Paul,” she admitted to herself, and questioned, “Is that love?”

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"It is a matter of making Life at once an act of faith and an act of prudence. . . ."—R. DE GOURMONT.

PAUL had taken a vigorous dislike to Isabella Croft. To observe her hold her own in a world of discreet official standards would encourage Prudence. He found his mind wandering from a military lecture to Prudence as he had first met her, running in and out of his cousin's house at Hove. He was staying there to recover from a wound. That was in October 1915. Prudence was sixteen then and a schoolgirl. She was an elfin being; elusive, childish, unfashionable, with mysterious home woes that he could not fathom, and an immense scorn for grown-up people. He never forgot her. His vision of her went with him to Mesopotamia and Palestine, impersonating the youth and charm of a disastrous world. On his first leave home from the East he had sought her out in the quiet home near Horsham, where her fretful father eked out a monotonous existence on a small pension. Prudence welcomed him. He represented the love affair her beauty expected. Four years had added two inches to her height, and her dark hair was no longer straight and prim in a plait, but gaily bobbed. Her narrow skirts were very short still and her day frocks were almost sleeveless. In the evening she wore an alarming golden garment with shoulder-straps. He discovered that she knew nothing of the world, had few acquaintances, and

formed the ideas which influenced her by the force of her own imagination ceaselessly inspiring day-dreams. For the practical realities of a picturesque High Street, crammed with cars and rich in grocers' stores, she had impatient contempt. All her gaiety was roused by Paul's presence; she almost danced to meet him when he made his daily appearance. They raced about in his little two-seater together, and her chatter and laughter expressed her pleasure in his new possession. Finally she accepted him and his two-seater, which he promptly sold in order to purchase household glass and china. He remembered gently that she was very sensitive and highly strung during their brief engagement. As a bride she had been heart-breakingly gallant and piteous by turns. Once she had said to him: "If I could only be sure that it is *you* who create my happiness; and not I, myself, and the excitement of living!" Prudence had looked forward eagerly to the East, and at first she was like a gay child at a party. Wherever she went she caused something of a sensation; perhaps she lost her head rather. There was a lot of rowdy bad form to be found in almost every cantonment in 1920 and 1921, and they had had their first serious quarrels because he tabooed as outrages what she tolerated as informalities. When the social tone improved the friction between them almost ceased. But financial difficulties became acute. Prudence longed to go to Simla: she said that India had its head in the clouds and she wanted to rise to those heights. It dawned slowly upon the dismayed captain of Indian infantry that the preposterous ambition of exerting a personal influence upon lofty rulers obsessed his pretty wife. He had chaffed her then and, mortified, she assumed the cheeky rebel's rôle of desiring to tell them what she thought

of them. Christmas week in Lahore was her next goal. He could not afford such festivities. She pined for a motor-car and means to enable her to entertain. The fact that she was much sought after gave her opportunities which she longed to develop in her own wilful fashion, and could not develop at all. Yet in a direct way she kept straight: she never ran recklessly into debt, she never played the fool with any man beyond the limit of pure mischief. From the first he had found her wayward, difficult, unwise, but never disloyal or bitter. Her good temper and high spirits had masked their disaster until it had declared itself to him so unmistakably the night that Prudence demanded a separation. All sense of security finally left him when she entreated him to give her a divorce. They were now strangers under one roof: she was his social partner, house-keeper, dependent. Paul made idle marks on the blotting-paper with his pencil; the lecturer's voice passed over him unheeded. He saw again that little smooth head with its childish pigtail, then the bobbed rough darkness of his bride's hair on the pillow, and now Prudence as she was last night at Flagstaff House: a tall woman with a skirt that nearly touched the ground, slim hips swathed with a sash, bare arms, and hair drawn back in a glossy black wave from her brow, but sweeping low across her ears and thin cheeks. In the deep purple and rose of her dress she had looked mature, a changed creature, a formidable adversary.

The lecture ended. Paul put on his khaki helmet and walked down the long Mall alone. There was something so unsociable in his air that tactful men forbore to offer him their company. The hot weather lay before them, and Prudence must go to the hills. She ought to go to the cheapest boarding-house they

could discover in a quiet hill station. He feared to broach the subject to her, yet it was necessary to book rooms. And he visualised with deep misgivings the effect of uncongenial surroundings upon her in her present state of mind. Four months of restriction, denial, despondency. There was no submission in her soul to spiritual ideals, no agreement in her mind with legal argument, no love in her heart for him. What then would keep her his? The potency of a possession lies in its association with ourselves. In Paul's nature the association of his wife with himself was so complete that at the very thought of a severance he felt the anguish of a lover, the dishonour of a husband, and the simple wrath of a barbarian. As he tramped into his house, experiencing the temporary loss of sight of one who moves suddenly out of the glare of Indian sunshine, his whole figure jumped, and his set temper was sent reeling, because his impossible wife sprang out at him with the foolish and effectual "Boo!" of a school-girl. Youth was in her; a tricky thing of moods and madness, trivialities and decisive action. He could only command his irritability to silence, unwind the arms she had so cruelly thrown around his neck, and stalk on to his room. He heard her vexed exclamation: "Oh goodness! What a serious monster it is!" Then a masculine voice struck his ear, asking her, "Do you often do that sort of thing?" He returned to the drawing-room and found that Prudence had done more than jump out at him. She had sprung a situation upon him.

He extended his hand to the unknown guest: a bronzed man of about forty, tall and with a smooth-shaven face that seemed to possess an X-rays outfit of its own, so penetrating were the blue eyes. A man whose features and voice were expressive enough

to enable the language of his lips to give utterance to his whole personality. "I didn't see you when I came in," Paul apologised.

"Mr. Montgomery was a patient in a convalescent home where I worked as a V.A.D. for about five minutes. Now he is globe trotting in India and has suddenly turned up here," Prudence explained.

Montgomery did not resume his seat, but stood scrutinising Graham. "You must be a man of iron," he said.

"Rather startling," admitted Paul, slowly relaxing into a broad grin.

"I should have dropped down dead, I think," Montgomery remarked.

Prudence laughed. "Look here, Paul," she cried, "this is the greatest bit of luck. Mr. Montgomery is just the very friend we need to give us advice. He is a barrister and has had to give up his profession since the war—lungs, poor dear—and is going to a decent climate in New Zealand."

Paul found nothing to say to this terse information and began deliberately to fill his beloved pipe. He had a very non-committal and cautious air. A stranger might be any kind of fool, he thought.

Montgomery sat down, but swung round in his chair towards his hostess and addressed her with amused indulgence.

"Advice? Why in the world should you ask my advice? You never take anyone's advice, I'll be sworn. Now, if you want my opinion about the situation in India—that is another thing. I landed last week and formed one at once. It's the country for a white man's suicide and a brown man's murder—in the long run." Paul chuckled.

Prudence lifted a warning finger. "Be serious,

please. You and I were great friends once. Are we great friends still ? ”

“ Till death, or until you spring upon me from behind that door. It is the same thing,” Montgomery assured her.

“ Then listen ! ” Prudence urged him with intense sincerity. “ Paul and I have been married for nearly four years, and I want to chuck it.”

Her husband, committed to this forfeiture of decent privacy by her outrageous frankness, took refuge in a silence of complete reserve. He kept his countenance. The barrister’s keen eyes sparkled with a suppressed amusement. A glance searched Paul’s face and met a barrier. In deference to that he answered the wife lightly, “ There are various ways of ‘ chucking ’ responsibilities, of course.”

“ I want the cleanest one,” Prudence said.

“ Then die,” his voice had a bite in it. But he signalled a laugh with his eyebrows.

“ No,” said Prudence. “ Certainly not. I adore life. I want a divorce ; and Paul is the very best of husbands. It is an extraordinary situation, for I am a blameless wife. Now, what can you do for us ? ” Under her mocking gaiety she was terribly in earnest, and both men knew it.

Graham broke out explosively. “ Why should he do anything ? If you want a legal opinion you must not cadge one.” His honesty revolted at the wicked creature’s casual ways with a man’s professional claims.

“ That’s all right,” Montgomery took command by the very inflection of his voice. “ Quite the last thing that Mrs. Graham wants is a legal opinion. There are no grounds whatever for legal action. That is what is so refreshing—and interesting.”

“ Grounds must be found,” murmured this intrepid

feminine explorer. "Pastures new where trespassers will be prosecuted. But I cannot persuade Paul to get a move on. He hates the idea of a divorce."

Montgomery inspected his glum host again, and threw a world of tolerant and speculative meditation into the words, "He does, does he? Hates it, eh?"

Prudence exclaimed with exasperation, "Though what the pleasure can be in keeping me against my will——"

The barrister pounced. "Pleasure? He exercises *his* will, my dear lady. That's a very great satisfaction, let me tell you."

"I call it selfish tyranny," Prudence muttered.

"You would, of course," Montgomery agreed. Paul began to think he might like the fellow. "I should certainly recommend you to appeal for sympathy rather than justice."

"Surely I have a right to freedom?" she cried.

"You possess free-will," he told her dryly. "Up to a point you can exercise it. For instance, short of physical force, no power on earth can prevent you from leaving your husband's roof."

"But where am I to go?" she demanded. "I have no money of my own. I can't beg, or steal. There is no available work here. How am I to buy a ticket? I tell you I'm in bondage. And, if I could depart, *that* would not entitle me to a divorce."

"Nothing would entitle you to a divorce except your husband's faithlessness, if he is an Englishman and as the law stands now," Montgomery gave her the information with intentional cheerfulness. "If you were so far to fall short of my cherished memory of you as to cease to be a blameless lady that would not entitle you to a divorce. It would merely render you liable to *be* divorced."

"It would come to the same thing," she declared.



She turned on Graham. "Who cares whether Mrs. Croft was divorced by her first husband, or divorced him?"

He slowly removed his pipe from his mouth. "You talk of your rights: if you become a divorced person so do I. You might as well claim that you have a right to give me small-pox because you've got it."

Prudence dropped her head between her hands and rocked herself to and fro for a moment. Then she groaned, "Isn't he pig-headed?"

Montgomery intervened. "Why this passion for the law? No one in his senses ever wants to have dealings with it."

"If there is only one door I must go out by it, even as I had to come in by it," Prudence retorted. Then she turned angrily upon both the men. "Where is the right and the wrong that I may find it for certain? Paul and I have been away in an outlandish place in the wilds where British subjects who were Hindus had one marriage law, British subjects who were Mahomedans had another, British subjects who were—well, I won't say Christians but European—had a third! John—that's my step-brother—was in love; Joyce, his wife, was in love too, but she is religious; the marriage vow is sacred to her. Joyce isn't like me. Paul has all the old-fashioned ideals of marriage. I have none of them. If public opinion is a safe guide, I can tell you that Mrs. Croft is going to be Peshawar's next craze. I feel it in my bones. Why should I regard the English law as infallible? The Scottish law is different. So is the French law, and they are a practical people. Only one quarter of their divorces are given for unfaithfulness. They admit other grounds. Who is *right* I'd like to know?"

Paul said stolidly: "Argument is useless. Can't

you see that different races have made different plans as seems best to them ? We are English, you and I. We married accepting certain definite obligations." He got up, and said coldly to Montgomery: "Sorry you've been bored with our affairs. I'm afraid I can't contribute anything acceptable to the discussion, so I will be off." He flung a furious look at Prudence and left the room.

"Do you know, I like your husband," Montgomery definitely pronounced.

It was formidable, this fact that Paul was so likeable. Prudence gave a queer little smile. "So do I," she asserted. "And sometimes I feel that it is quite hopeless to attempt to retrieve decently the mistake I made in marrying him. But it is beyond my strength to master this longing for a new start in which, on the stage or by some other adventure, I might gain everything—wealth, fame, and love."

He nodded. Then he laughed: "It is a good thing Graham is a soldier. Had I been obliged to engage daily in your method of dispute it would have entirely unfitted me for the practice of my profession. How did you come to marry him?"

"I liked him better than any man I knew," she admitted frankly. "I seldom spoke to a man. It was an empty, aimless existence that I led. I was too young to know my own mind."

Montgomery looked sceptical. "The advantage of your acquiring knowledge of your own mind as regards matrimony at the age of fifty seems to me but slight. You had attained the age of consent and you consented. Very natural, wasn't it ? A well set-up young officer, the glamour of India, the fun of being a married woman—you knew your mind very well, madam, I assure you. You've changed it, that's all. Who wrought this change, eh?"

Her answer surprised him. "Everybody, a little. Bit by bit. I've developed expensive tastes, you see. Three people, men, have specially influenced me, I think. The General, for one: he enjoys exercising his power to flatter and interest me. Then there is his A.D.C. I am awfully fond of him, but he likes Paul best. He makes one feel that after all a stuffy thing like a man's respect is worth keeping. You'd call him a good influence no doubt. Then there is a rich man. He made love to me, but is not in love with me. He passes the time and doesn't want to pass the winning post. He has a queer sort of effect on me: when I am with him I want to beat him on his own ground. Even odds and ends like shoe-laces become of importance; I wish to be above criticism in every detail. It is the sort of subjugation which turns me into a snob. After I have been with him I feel that I cannot endure poverty."

"The fortitude to endure poverty is the fortitude to endure law; lacking it you are a rebel," he told her. Then he added, "And you feel the need for self-expression; in that, as in much else, you are an individualist."

Prudence waited, rather breathlessly, for him to speak again. His years, his career, his keen mind made him rich in experience. From him, if from anyone, she might expect profitable counsel.

Montgomery's next words impressed Prudence. "You interest me," he slowly pronounced. "You interest me profoundly. For you are typical of those who lack much and crave much: not wisely, nor beautifully, but intensely. If passionate love, good fortune, and success finally elude you, you will be desperate as one whose prey has escaped her."

She leant towards him; sinuous, active, graceful

and intent. "Yes, yes," she whispered. "Can you aid me?"

He shot his answer at her. "A thousand times *no*. Those who successfully plot to set traps to ensnare worldly desires are only skilful fools. Who can satisfy the insatiable?"

Prudence drew back, indignant. "I only want the things other people want!" she cried. "Why should I meekly accept denial?"

"You will come to grief if you hurry half-way to meet it," Montgomery warned her. "The greedy gambler who wants to get rich quick courts disaster for himself quite as effectually as the hungry fellow who starts looting. You admit no impediment to self-seeking, recognise nothing sacred in a contract. You've got the wrong spirit."

She made a little gesture of despair. "Oh, you men are all alike—just as bad as the Old Testament gentleman. Sacrifice is what you preach. Goodness knows what you practise!"

Montgomery ignored her outbreak and in a level tone, as though he brought her face to face with hard facts, he continued: "You are one of the most dangerous of dreamers, for your vision is of the transcendence of material things. I don't tell you to accept your fate, Mrs. Graham, I tell you to realise it. Perceive the things of the mind. Art is my mistress; without her life to me would become now a mere squalid affair of spitting blood. Seek for inspiration, because mere calculation will bankrupt you of happiness."

For a moment she seemed gentle, wistful. "John—who was rather horrid to me—told me I needed salvation. I think he likes Joyce being so religious. I can't be religious just to soothe myself, I'm afraid."

"Then fall in love," Montgomery urged concisely.

"That's sudden as conversion, and tenacious as conviction. That's the cure for you. God or man, but *love*, which is spiritual."

"What about the law, then?" she cried triumphantly.

"Let it meet its match," said he with a twist of his thin lips. "I've no sentiment about its letter; to observe it is compulsory. I've an unbounded respect for the spirit of justice; that's obligatory on civilisation. *Noblesse oblige*, Mrs. Graham. A man of honour is as good as his word, and that's your husband's position. You've no position now: merely a hostile attitude." He broke off with a laugh. "I'm firing off platitudes at a pretty woman instead of paying her compliments. What a fool, eh?"

"You don't mind if I call you unsympathetic, do you?" she suggested.

He replied grimly, "I have seen women so tormented in their marriages; so heartbroken, humiliated, and betrayed that you must forgive me if I find your discontent a trifle exacting. You deserve a husband made of steel, whose will is law."

"You are describing a safe in a solicitor's office," she pertly retorted. "I have never met a man like that."

He postponed his farewell, attracted by her good temper and hardihood, her prettiness and her youth. "I'd help you if I could," he said lingering. "Perhaps it has done you good to talk it out? Your generation discusses everything and mine did not. But we told lovely ladies that we worshipped them; may I do that?"

She languidly and sweetly accepted this. Yet she summed up their interview critically: "You are artistic," she said, "and pursue what is beautiful, but you condemn me for desiring purchase power to

obtain beautiful things. How would you like to live with this furniture?"

Montgomery looked at the second-hand bazaar-made stuff, and smiled. "I'd accept such household gods philosophically enough as part of the camp kit of an officer's wife here, in an eastern city on a fierce frontier. No place has ever fascinated my imagination as this does. I could watch the caravans for ever. You lack romance."

She threw out her arms dramatically. "According to you I lack all things. I feel as though I were a drought in springtime," she cried.

Montgomery caught her by her shoulders and covered her face with kisses. Suffocated, she struggled free, and angry; but, at a loss for words, she flung one at him, "Unfair!"

He met this without apology, debonair and hard: "I take an advantage because you are unarmed! Without creed or code. What is your resistance worth? *My* chivalry was your only safeguard. But when you reckon on immunity, don't count on that! If you leave that husband of yours you'll expose yourself to many a rude awakening. My bad manners are unpardonable of course, but I fear you will always buy your experience at the man's price."

Prudence hardly heard him. Her blood was surging in her ears; her heart seemed to be rapping floor, walls and ceiling. "I think you'd better go," she said unsteadily.

"Yes, it is the safer course," he rejoined quietly.

When he left her she had a sense of exhaustion and sudden defeat. As Montgomery lit his cigarette and sped along the Mall in his hired motor he cursed his own weakness but muttered, "That should teach her a lesson."

Prudence had not recovered her balance when she

heard sounds of Paul returning. The clock warned her that this portended something odd: the glittering afternoon had merged into brief twilight, and the club should still hold him. He entered the room to find her limp, no mischief alert in her, but intensely observant as is one brought unexpectedly close to danger.

"That fellow Montgomery gone?" Paul asked.

"A few moments ago," she answered feebly.

It appeared unimportant to Paul, white and very restrained. "I've something to tell you," he said gravely. "No use trying to break it slowly. They've shot Dick Davis."

"No!" Prudence made a gesture to drive away this knowledge, beat it off, keep it from her heart. "No!"

"In the city. He was buying a Persian rug in the street of the Story Tellers when a fanatic got him. Shot in the back. Three of our sepoy were quite close, at a fruit-stall, and they bagged the man. A gunner was passing in a tonga and he declares Dick was quite dead when he reached him. The carpet merchant says he dropped out of his chair and did not speak. So he can't have suffered."

All the sounds of the cantonment and the quickening garden beat into the room as trivial intrusions: life seemed a fragile manifestation—and death was awful, triumphant. Prudence had no tears: she stood there quivering, and exclaimed, "I feel robbed! To be deprived of Dick—oh, how dare fate be so cruel and so unfair?"

"Poor old Dick," said Paul very gently. "Such a rotten way to lose his life."

Prudence flung herself on the sofa, hid her face in a cushion, and beat her clenched fist angrily upon the seat. Her impotent wretchedness made her writhe.

Paul looked down on her, puzzled. "It's worse for his people, and the girl he was engaged to," he remonstrated.

She lifted her face. "What girl?"

"It wasn't given out because they could not afford to get married. She lives in Dublin, where her brother was shot eighteen months ago," Paul said.

The things people told Paul! Dick was gone, and his friendship for her had not been so complete as she had supposed. Now she would always wonder—Then her egotism was submerged by a great pity for Dick, who had so loved life. She saw again his jolly sunburnt face, realised his good-will, his pleasantness, and her tears flowed. Paul had known the loss of a comrade so often, death had taken so great a toll of his generation, that he was sick of it all. For a brief moment the gulf dividing those young married people was bridged because they mourned together. Paul told her that he must change into uniform and go on duty, for the city was to be picketed that night. She sat there dully when he had gone, and on his return to the room she said, "Don't get shot too," in a troubled voice.

"It would have simplified things if they had killed me instead of Dick," he answered as he passed her. She heard him mount his charger and ride away.

"Strangers; all strangers," Prudence muttered aghast. Montgomery, who dropped from forgotten years, talked wisdom to her and then bruised her in her wilful folly by his insolent and unloving embrace. Paul, suddenly shown as desperate and set in a cruel city. Dick, dead and revealed as another's sworn lover; Dick so loyal and true that her vanity could claim none of his brief life's passion as her own. And death, the stranger that must be met by all. The vulgar mocking words formed in her shrinking



mind, 'What price Dick Davis now?' If there was a resurrection of the dead and a life everlasting what would become of the spirit of Prudence Graham, worshipping a trinity of pounds, shillings, and pence? She rocked herself to and fro, frantic in her impatient bewilderment; confronted with mystery, companioned by sorrow and dismay. "Now they take me at my face value—mere kisses!" she moaned. "What will happen to me when I'm old, when I'm dead?"

•

Our past is clean forgot,  
Our present is and is not,  
Our future's a sealed seedpot,  
And what betwixt them are we ?

ROSSETTI.

GRIEF is mysterious, its emotions are incommunicable. The murder of Dick Davis caused sorrow and anger and regret to many people : his aunts were horrified, his friends melancholy, and Peshawar was infuriated. All the British there were filled with wrath, and the Dogras, Jats, Sikhs and Punjabi Mahomedans of his battalion in the Khyber Pass were fiercely indignant. Not a few men shed tears. But his widowed mother and a dry-eyed pale girl in Ireland alone knew grief. Prudence Graham quivered to the shock of it. She could not pacify her painful mental excitement and curiosity as to Dick's fate after the ghastly moment when he became a corpse. For the first time she was face to face with a desperate desire to know what had become of a personality. She had hitherto regarded her own conscience as the parsonic voice of a conventional passenger with pious aspirations whom her lovely body unwillingly carried, much as a P. & O. carries a missionary to be eventually discharged upon a farther shore for better or worse. Not until now had she loved man, woman, or child numbered among the dead, desired reassurance, longed for reunion. She stayed from Dick's funeral, shuddering. Yet she felt great awe at the

hour when she knew that the army in Peshawar, grown in its emotions to the full stature of a man, had gathered together to do honour to the dear dust committed to the earth.

This disappearance of Dick terrified her. She looked up at the sky and thought of the desire of the eyes. "Ah," sighed she, "one can see so much more than one can hear. The bird up there is out of ear-shot, but my sight has captured all the blue. My glance outranges my grasp by untravelled miles, and the invisible must remain a mystery. If I could only see Dick again in his shabby coat! but to-day the earth hides him for ever."

A week passed, and, moved always more by character than by convention, she did not lend herself to the resumption of gaiety to which the other young married women eagerly turned, crying, 'He'd wish us to be happy.' Prudence moped like any despised Early Victorian, serious as a saddened child.

The Trenches sorrowed for Dick, and the General, impatient of depression, decided to carry his wife off for a change to Rawalpindi. The idea of a week spent in a hotel made no great appeal to Eleanor, but she yielded to please him, only to find herself saddled with Prudence Graham as a guest. Trench had found her in tears and confessing to sleepless nights, and had promptly insisted that she should accompany them. It would have amazed Eleanor had she known that Prudence crept to her side because she believed that Lady Trench had a certainty of life after death. Paul showed no great enthusiasm for this visit, but he said, "Go, if you think it will amuse you."

To his surprise she turned on him as though hurt, crying, "I suppose you think I care for nothing but amusement!"

"You wouldn't be happy without some grievance or other," he retorted.

"That's so like a husband," she groaned.

"Do you expect me to be like a hippopotamus?" asked young Graham idiotically.

One thing is certain; the Grahams were young. The General looked with eager eyes at the charm of it in Prudence when she joined him and his faded wife on the station platform. But Paul's youth filled him with envy. That fellow could appropriately court romance without feeling a fool. In his undistinguished independence he had little to lose and everything to gain by adventure. Trench felt himself to be sedate, commonplace, by comparison.

Paul saw his wife off in a critical mood. He thought the General was gallivanting and rather an ass about Prudence. He deemed him a lucky man to be able to 'do' women so well, give them a good time, afford them the comfort and pleasures they so persistently desired. But he knew intimately the professional rivalry and jealousy Thomas Trench had to encounter. It was a disillusioning thing in the service, he thought, that atmosphere of personal antagonisms and intrigues among the chiefs of the Army. Yet he saw a military career in the light of a romance: these soldiers were England's lovers. A business man had personal success or failure to hope for as a merchant, but army veterans contended for the supreme trust of the nation, the approval of posterity, the position of England's favourite. He could well understand what the secret hope of being Commander-in-Chief in India must mean in the General's heart of hearts: how it must overpower other aspiring emotions, filling his mind with a deep desire, tempering his will. To receive, not only the obedience of the army in India, but the oriental respect for force

of her inarticulate millions ; and to receive it gently, simply, like an officer and a gentleman,—that was a man's job all right. Graham wondered what Trench's chances were, and knew that he would not throw one of them away for the sake of the bright eyes of Prudence. Those twin stars were his, Paul's, affair.

Eleanor Trench resented the Grahams' youth as an intrusion. She ached with jealousy of Prudence as the train swept them onwards to Rawalpindi. Surely Dick had been dearer to her than to this minx, and yet it was to her that Thomas Trench gave his sympathy. Every little incident of the journey annoyed the older woman, who begrudged her guest each act of hospitable courtesy which Trench bestowed upon her with such devotion. Provocations accumulated, and Eleanor grew harder, more rigid, as hours passed. Her heart swelled within her as she passionately pictured the standard of conduct she had maintained beside this careless man all the days of their marriage. Not easily were lofty conceptions held, not without sacrifice was even personal loyalty achieved. Did Thomas Trench imagine that knights-errant never crossed her path when she was young ? She felt weary of the sustained effort to hold him, the endless discipline that created her well-groomed appearance. When they reached the hotel she hated the noise and glare of the irregular sun-swept courtyards, the voices of the pedlars besieging innumerable verandahs, the pacing of chargers, and the vibration of motors. She entered her cold white-washed room, shivered by its fire, glanced in utter depression at her worn face in the stained looking-glass, and announced her intention of resting. In other words, she would remain pent up and brooding in that dismal room.

Outside Prudence, as fresh as the dew, and greatly

pleased with the General and Rawalpindi, afforded a pleasing contrast. Trench reported to her that his wife had a headache and suggested a hasty meal and an immediate expedition to Taxila. Many officers, snatching an early breakfast in the dining-room, noted the pretty woman who made merry by the window and seemed to gather amusement out of every event that took place on the long Mall. Without intention or effort she imposed herself upon that crowded room of small tables, where the *khit-mutgars* moved like restless shadows and there was a continual stir and noise of insignificant objects: plates, napkins, knives, a flicker of hands, and every now and then the crackle of the sheets of a newspaper turning. Years after men would say, 'Yes, I saw her once in a hotel.'

Prudence said suddenly: "Isn't it awful, Sir Thomas—hours pass now and I don't even think of poor Dick? Yet a fortnight ago he would have been here with us, so intensely alive. People have lost interest in him already. And his opinion has lost its value. A short while ago he counted in Peshawar; now Captain Strickland is to play back in their regimental team and Dick would have had a fit at that. Nobody cares."

The General nodded; but he said, "You are mistaken—they care, but they have got to get on without him."

She murmured passionately, "I wish he had had everything he wanted; *everything*. Good polo ponies, and a motor, and lots of cash, and a V.C., and that girl he wanted to marry." Then she paused and added very honestly with a quaint little sigh, "I'm sorry he wanted to marry that girl."

Trench smiled at her and said, "Dick was a lucky fellow. He died before he lost his illusions."

When they entered the big hired motor he carried an uncomfortable picture in his mind of Eleanor abandoned to the dim solitude of that dull room in the hotel. "It's absurd of her," he thought.

They travelled north-west for twenty miles to the region of Taxila; the snow mountains of Hazara glittered in the serene heavens, and a tranquil silence brooded over the stark nullahs. They traversed the deserted route which of old saw all the trade between Hindustan and high Asia. The warm and supple earth was here covered by rocks as though it had clothed itself in armour, and each grey stone gleamed like cold steel. The atmosphere flashed with light and quivered as does water, while the rigid line where land and sky met was like the darkened rim of a glass. It was a vast, harsh, and terrific scene, and the black body of the motor hurried its shadow through the valley like a monster beetle on an immense beach scurrying away from sunshine and sound. Ahead of them, its contour clear and significant among the spires of the whispering hills, a stupa bore stately witness to the blinding of a man, to the intrigue of a woman, to principalities and powers known to Eurasian Greeks in far-off centuries.

Up and down this stony land of hidden treasure had wandered the indifferent and uneducated during countless generations. A watchman living in a tiny village had filched the art of long-forgotten conquerors from unvalued shrines and bartered them in heedless bazaars. Ignorance had blinded the eyes of rulers and armies till at last, yielding to the investigations of a master mind, the earth was making its tremendous dumb disclosures, so that the British General, together with the young woman at his right hand, saw the monuments of Alexander's invasions, of the sway of Darius, King of Persia, of the Buddha's

incalculable influence, of Chandragupta's dynasty, of the great Asoka's viceroyalty, of Parthian and Scythian lordship. They followed the footsteps of learned Chinese pilgrims, and of the conquering white Hun lords. In this iron waste they idly examined rocks that were cenotaphs. The whole eloquent region was revealed as a sepulchre of might, art, learning, law. Nor did any civic peace seem more durable, more fertile, more inspiring, than the ways of warriors. For the forces of destruction, whether in battle, or by the subtle process of degeneration, had proved invincible.

"Before Alexander the Great subdued this land Taxila had the devil of a reputation as a University Town," Trench told Prudence. "And now it is a case of sermons in stones, and I contribute to the Punjab one ignorant Briton's share of the teaching of Eton and Sandhurst. Queer thing, history. A ghostly, haunting thing."

Prudence followed him silently towards a ruined monastery; the stillness was jarred only by the falling of rocks disturbed by the brown feet of a goatherd scrambling among wild olives with his flocks. In this scene of desolation novices and slaves had once spent busy days; the cells, the refectory, the hall of assembly, could all be traced. Carved elephants and lions survived their popularity among dead imaginations. The soldier and the woman came to a standstill before a group of stucco figures. The Buddha meditated, desire overcome, content attained. On that calm face Jehovah's minister of flaming fire might gaze with envy. His hands, palms upward, rested one upon the other as if they had no further need of cunning, and nothing to conceal. On the left an attendant carried a fly-whisk, on the right another held a thunderbolt. The



artist had devoutly attributed immunity from the petty vexation of the teasing insect, and possession of the power to terrify mankind, to this sublime master of all emotion.

"That face is sexless," criticised Prudence.

"No. He is the consummation of all humanity there, and the Greek plural is masculine," the General announced. She made a little sound of protest which he ignored. This man who had fought in Flanders, held high command in Babylon, defended Egypt, and taken part in the conquest of the Holy Land, looked now upon images of bygone rulers as a man of blood royal might trace his ancestry among the tombs and effigies of kings. His face was keen, inscrutable, and without arrogance as he stood long before a group carved in a little cell. Twelve subordinate figures crowded about this protective Buddha, and among the twelve was a virile man, bearded and with a decorative moustache. His face had classic features and looked out upon India as a stranger from a far country. He was booted and belted; he wore a hat not unlike the General's sun-helmet, and a tunic reached to his strong knees.

"Look here," Trench said to Prudence, his voice awaking all the echoes like a single trumpet sounding for the resurrection, "there's Buddha saying, 'Peace be with you,' and there's the man of action, the foreigner like myself. I wonder what luck he had out here. I wonder how one makes peace."

"War has brought you luck," said envious Prudence.

He was heedless of that, and explained to her with a strange urgency, his eyes still upon that merciful face and the bold pioneer: "A soldier's not a man of iron, you know. The plumber is that. The soldier

is a man of stars like the sailor. Stars and signs. Maps and signals if you're precise. I loathe war, but the influence of Mars sets men to dream of glory without counting the cost. A soldier's death is all right; there is no better way of managing our bitter business of dying. To 'depart in peace according to Thy word'—yes, at the word of command it is done manfully."

"Orders, always orders," murmured the girl. "But what of the promise, or contract? I want a guarantee of felicity if my soul is to serve the unseen forces as the mightier and the immortal. What is the surety for my own survival after death?"

Trench made a gesture indicating all that had come and gone in Taxila and gave a grim smile. "Want a guarantee, do you? I'm afraid nothing is positive except a last appearance. Read the advertisement of that finality around you, here."

Prudence stretched her arms out as though to grasp something beyond this territory of pale stones and breathless shadows. "Then I'll make hay while the sun shines for me," she cried defiantly.

"Over there in Jandial," said the General, pointing westward, "are the ruins of a temple with broken Ionic columns, and traces of a tower which may have been a zikurrat like the zikurrats of Mesopotamia. There they worshipped the sun." He looked upon her rebellious little face with its mute appeal against mystery, against the supernatural, and said stubbornly: "Eros and Kama, Vishnu and Lakshmi, the Lord Buddha, and Athena have been prayed to in Taxila. Monks, scribes, kings, saints, and soldiers have come and gone. And you ladies cast your glamour then as now. Did you notice, in one of the cells, that woman on the left of that figure of Buddha teaching? The ornaments your sex delights in have

been found, and the apartments of the zenana. Old Hsuan Tsang—he globe-trotted here over a thousand years ago—recorded that a woman who was a leper came to worship at one of the stupas we've passed to-day. The East never has ranked cleanliness next to godliness and never will, but she found the court filthy and washed it and scattered flowers. A miracle happened then: her disgusting leprosy left her and her good looks returned to her. Purity, loveliness; humanity has always craved for woman to possess those attributes. She worked, she loved beauty; in the end she won through. So Hsuan Tsang says."

Prudence saw Trench give one long look at the carved stranger, and then turn on his heel abruptly. He glanced right and left over his shoulder as they scrambled down the hill: he was interested and intent. Those who had organised ritual and learning and the art of war in the past had left him something to appreciate. This European admired the ceremonious, the man who turned the tables on his adversary without turning a hair, the lover who took pains while taking liberties. Prudence envied him his reaction to Taxila, his lore, his urgent imagination. It all enriched existence for him by intensifying experience.

As the sun set they stood together before the shrine of the double-headed eagle at Sirkap. Around them man at his primitive task of digging had disclosed buried history. The deserted city was very still. In the background rocky heights flushed suddenly from base to crest as though to signal a response to the day's farewell. But for that sensitive reflection of light the million crowding stones in their cold multitudes would have appeared to crush out every sign of nature's emotion by their petrified barrenness.

The General looked critically at the bird so long caged under the earth. "The Scythians brought that here, and the Germans and Russians who borrowed the design from them would very much like to stand where I stand now, and in my shoes." He dwelt a moment quietly on that thought, then said, "Well, we must move on."

As they retraced their steps through ruin to the road they saw a big Punjabi praying. His dark blue puggaree bowed down upon the earth, then shot above his knees that were pressed there, finally it swept out against the sky as, standing erect, he made his profession of faith. "From Dionysus to Mahomed," said the General. "And you and I for Christendom," at which Prudence made a little frightened movement.

The Mahomedan presented a gallant picture with his baggy white trousers that were gathered in at the ankles, while his great feet were shod in stout shoes with long-pointed and turned-up ends to them. His white shirt fell like a tunic to his knees and over it he wore a waistcoat upon which were hung the medals of the great war. He saluted the British officer and said "Salaam, sahib," with a bashful friendliness.

"What do you do here?" asked the General.

"Sahib, I guard these tombs," said the ex-sepoy.

"Your kismet is good, or you would have found a grave in Europe," said Trench, his eyes on the 1914-1915 star.

"By the favour of the Presence I escaped death," the Punjabi cheerfully declared as though he had rendered himself immortal.

"Praise be to Allah," the General responded, and they left the Indian soldier standing there in the land

of his fathers which other white men ruled three hundred years before Christ. On their melting away like snow it fell into a brown study again till Walter Gilbert took the surrender of flying Sikhs at Rawalpindi on March 14, 1849, and then pushed their Afghan mercenaries headlong through the Khyber Pass; and, hey presto! the white man was there and dominant once more.

Prudence never forgot how Thomas Trench turned from her to look back at the district of Taxila slipping away from them into the darkness which appeared to extend wraith-like from black excavations, shades of carved figures, and the blindness of abandoned dwelling-places, and said, "You're young—and so there's a moral for you in every story. And the moral of this one plainly is that you must leave no stone unturned—look well at the mass of them—no stone unturned in your search for the truth."

"Ah, life's too short," cried she.

As they sped along with the northern air biting their faces, the General said, "Oh, you women, you women! Not much feeling for impersonal matters, have you? There are few idealists among you. If you had all your pretty heads together out here, would the result have been a choice of so fine a watchword as we commonplace Englishmen adopted, 'Heaven's light our guide'?" He touched something and the lamps of his motor spread out a radiance that disclosed the road yard by yard and then discarded it again to the secret night.

"That's better," remarked Prudence pointedly, and Trench laughed.

On their return to the hotel he avoided an immediate encounter with his wife, shrinking from her mute criticism. She demanded, she had always

demanding, his exclusive attention, interest, emotion. And he was by temperament a man of many friends, great enterprise. He had been faithful to her according to the letter of the law. And his spirit had been loyal to his wife: his admiration, respect, and deep affection were hers still. Eleanor never made a fuss, seldom uttered an exacting request, but the pain which he inflicted invariably reacted on his nerves. He knew only too well that when he gave her all that he wished to give he left her unsatisfied. Her love overtaxed his resources. Yet it was her steady endeavour, her fortitude, her inflexible moderation of conduct which preserved their home life from accident and disaster. Trench never sought to change her attitude; he accepted it as fine and recognised it as final.

Prudence, the intrepid, sought out her hostess at once. She found Eleanor reading a novel by Galsworthy. She put the book aside and seemed to return from a great distance. But she returned clear-eyed and observant. Prudence, who knelt on the hearthrug, was wearing the tweed coat and skirt she had seen a hundred times: undoubtedly this young woman, in spite of her ardent craving for luxury and abundance, exercised self-denial. And she had not danced lightly with the others while the earth was settling slowly, slowly, upon Dick. For all that Prudence Graham made extravagant claims she could manifest a severe and fastidious restraint when in touch with realities. And now her ardent voice had a sombre note in it.

"We've been howling like jackals among the tombs," she announced. "It frightens me into fits the way human beings simply vanish. What do you think has become of Dick?"

The older woman answered serenely: "The per-

sonality that survives physical death is the soul's secret development, and none of us are intimate with the soul. In this universe there are such diverse forms and manifestations of vitality, that in our ignorance we cannot have any conception of the mysterious life into which Dick's spirit has entered. At least so it seems to me."

"I've lost the only Dick I know," Prudence muttered. "It is all frightfully difficult and unsatisfactory, isn't it? It is all right for you, of course, because you can believe all sorts of comforting things, but I can't. At least, I don't know."

The firelight poured its glow over Eleanor, but the white face of Prudence seemed to reflect still the pallor of stones. She said drearily: "I suppose you were brought up in a religious atmosphere. I was not. If I had been a clergyman's daughter I might have thought of God now as an infallible bishop, and of heaven as an unending repetition of choral services in the cathedral; and I'd be certain Dick was singing hymns there clothed in white. But all that is no use to me."

"Nor to anyone except an idiot," said Eleanor sharply. "You have no conception of spiritual truths if you can suggest them as childish, instead of simple. And why should you expect to attain this very moment to a consolation, a certainty, and a light that have to be fought for through long years?"

"I thought conversion might be swift," Prudence flashed.

"Yes," said the other gravely, "in the twinkling of an eye if your spirit receives the inspiration of God. But from me, no. The communion of souls involves a long co-operation in labour. You have to strive if you would obtain."

A silence fell and into it Prudence broke with the

energy of indignation. "Why has it been made so difficult for us? I should have thought that if the perfecting of humanity is the aim of existence the facts of the case might have been revealed to human intelligence. He had so brief an existence, poor Dick, and he had to spend it playing blind man's buff! Why—why—why?" Her impatient hands struck the floor where she sat, deeply questioning.

Eleanor said critically, "You don't read much, do you?"

Prudence shrugged her shoulders. "No, I have no time. I just look at the illustrated papers."

The other suggested in her quiet cultured voice, "Why don't you read the book of Job? It is a wonderful bit of literature, and here in the East it strikes you with vivid flashes of insight. I know nothing of it from the point of view of learned authority."

The girl's delightful laugh rang out: "It is a long cry from Job to Dick, isn't it?"

The other replied hotly, "It is a long cry from the Greek invasion to the British occupation. You come straight from Taxila, so I thought you would understand—would feel the mysterious bond between the living and the dead."

"No," said Prudence, very restlessly. "No, I feel the severance, the separation; the disappearance and departure."

"It has come home to you through Dick," Lady Trench said. "I was thirty-two when the war broke out; in one awful rush nearly all my friends were killed or bereaved. Tom was dangerously wounded. I met many Job's comforters: people like Eliphaz, who pointed out that it was happening 'to everybody'; and 'now it is come upon thee and thou faintest.'"



"It has come upon me—a little," interrupted Prudence.

"Yes. But your generation won't listen to the Bildads who beg you to accept tradition, and conventional ideas; 'For enquire, I pray thee, of the former age . . . shall not they teach thee and tell thee?' You ask the agonised question of Job as to the future, 'If a man die—*shall he live again?*'"

"That is the essential question," Prudence affirmed. She sat on the floor with her knees drawn up and her hands clasped round them. Her fingers opened and shut at intervals. Her face was hidden, only her expression moving hands were visible. "If I knew for certain that old age and death were not my reduction to futility and zero, it would be worth while to . . . well, to try to be good. Though goodness knows what goodness is! I don't set up to be a saint, but even I would not do some of the things that have been done in the name of religion. If God is love why is there so much misery?"

"The mystery of life exists," the older woman maintained steadily. "Job saw what a fallacy it was to pretend that the wicked do not prosper, and it made him doubtful of ultimate justice. He claimed personal merit and saw it unrewarded, unprotected. His passion of pity had made him mindful of the sufferings of the unsheltered poor—'They are wet with the showers of the mountains' (I can see the shivering coolies in the Hills when I read that). Job had done good works and wanted credit and reward: 'I was eyes to the blind and feet was I to the lame . . . the cause which I knew not I searched out.' Can't you picture him with his genius for the actual and real remedy? Feet, not mere crutches, for the lame. His mental energy in investigation was as great as his moral courage: 'Did I fear great multi-

tudes, or did the contempt of families terrify me, that I kept silence and went not out of doors ?' To me there is no more fascinating debate in history than Job on his defence, justifying himself and judging God. As you do."

"Do I?" breathed Prudence.

"And so cannot find Him good enough for you," said the other woman cruelly. "You say—when Dick is killed—'If I were God I would not do that.' Job was righteous in his own eyes too, you know. A modern young woman like you should feel something in common with Elihu, the youth who said: 'There is a spirit in man and the Almighty giveth them understanding'; *but*, 'Great men are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment.' Elihu realised that each individual must co-operate to exercise that gift of intelligence and free-will; he said, 'Let us know among ourselves what is good.' Yet *he* was not a rebel; he admitted that God 'openeth also their ear to discipline.'" Her voice lingered on the ultimate word. "You and I, where armies have come and gone, sitting here in the midst of an army at this moment, find that last word a true one, I think. No nation will discover and preserve what is good without moral discipline. You can't, you *can't* do just as you please!" She seemed to defy the young loveliness beside her to break codes, divide homes, destroy loyalties—and get away with the thing.

Prudence was thinking that Eleanor Trench was very strong, and strength fascinated her. She remained intent upon her while she spoke again.

"Elihu had an answer for Job. But you must read it. I can only quote fragments, and it is truly great literature. He said: You claim merit for your brilliant imagination and your daring actions—

well, compare them with the acts of God : which do you think has the greater power, comprehension, inspiration ? He asks, ' Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea ? . . . Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth ? . . . Where is the way that light dwelleth ? . . . Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades or loose the bands of Orion ? . . . Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks ? ' Yes, it is great literature. You'll hardly get such guidance in *The Tatler*. It finishes, of course, like a modern novel with a happy ending : Job receives health and new wives, and offspring and wealth and cattle."

" Lucky Job," said Prudence moodily. " But I'll read the tale. I suppose humility is the only spirit in which to approach truth. I find that hard, you know. I am not in the least humble and I'd hate the feeling."

They brooded over the fire for a while and then Prudence broke out, " If you are not in love with your husband I don't see what is strong enough to keep you faithful, except religion."

" There is honour," said Eleanor honestly. She, who was very anxious that this bird's wings should be clipped.

" But the old-fashioned ideas about honour are exploded," Prudence protested.

" Oh, really ? " said Eleanor.

" Religion—it is *strong*," cried Prudence. " It is so strong I don't want it to grip me."

The other bent towards her, " If you became a mother," she said, " you would feel that this terrible and beautiful work of incarnation urges you to look for God until you find Him in the incarnate Christ."

Prudence brought her face close to the other's eyes and asked, " You truly believe that ? "

Eleanor answered, "I truly believe it." As the two Englishwomen in the East, with their voices dropped almost to whispers, uttered these words Trench opened the door.

"Still talking frocks and scandals?" he cried cheerfully. "It is very dark in here, Eleanor."

"Yea, made of chance and all a labouring strife  
We go charged with a strong flame ;  
For as a language Love hath seized on life  
His burning heart to story.

A. ABERCROMBIE.

GRAHAM was not given to introspection. He addressed few personal remarks to himself, and it would have been impossible to him to pull out the world's plums and exclaim, 'What a fine boy am I.' His brief exhortations to Paul Graham were apt to take the form of a grim 'Don't be an ass.' But those words belonged to the good old days when he had a wife who responded to his needs. Now he destroyed all self-satisfaction by his miserable verdict, 'I am a failure.' Though few will brook contradiction on making this announcement, all desire with pathetic anguish that it may be disproved. Paul, finding he was unloved by his wife, thought he was unlovable. He became sensitive to a degree that would have grown morbid had his temperament not been so sane and simple. His urgent, but unrecognised, demand was for a sign that he could inspire the ardour which he felt and perforce repressed. He hated the sight of all married couples who played golf and tennis together. Hockey with his men gave vent to his energy, but was otherwise useless. He sprained his wrist badly and was debarred from games for several days, and therefore fell back on society. Cocktails at the club and dinner at the Mess afforded him no

relief to his pent-up emotions. He said to the doctor impatiently that his wrist must be cured with all speed as he could not live without exercise. He was curtly told to foot it, and obediently tramped by the hour. The dust of Peshawar rose around him; camels lurched past him and motors' horns hooted at him and each smothered him in grey clouds. Only in the prim and watered ways of the cantonment could he breathe clear air, and there companionship mocked him. Blossoming shrubs with heavy scents laid their sensuous touch upon his taut nerves. Marriage with an unloving mate was like a violin with half its strings broken. Vibrating, jarred, and out of harmony with life, young Graham moved reluctantly among the flowers over the warm earth in the blazing daylight under the wings of gaudy green parrots. On the outskirts of cantonments, he encountered a pensioned Afridi subadar who had been in Dick's regiment. A burly man, scarred by smallpox.

It was when Northern India spoke to Graham by her soldiers' voices that the young officer felt her value to Asia, her claim on his attention. Like most Englishmen, and unlike all Indians, he had a warm place in his heart for Afridis, in spite of their obvious faults. Walking along with Muhammad Yusuf outside the city walls he enjoyed the bold freedom of the man's personality, which was without self-consciousness or any pose, knew nothing of vulgarity and fashion, paraded no 'stunt,' and aped no superiority. Loyal to his creed, clan, and kinsmen, faithful to his salt, and kind where his affection was kindled or his good nature active, Muhammad Yusuf had nothing of altruism in his character. He could be cruel, cunning, and treacherous at his need's bidding. He was indolent, jealous, and proud. Passion and courage had driven him as a gale, filling

sails, drives a ship through stormy seas. Hardships that he could endure without flinching would have unmanned a lesser breed, and he had faced death in battle, or in blood feud, as he faced life—selfish, but unafraid.

“The sahib was lion-hearted,” Muhammad Yusuf said of Dick. “The man who killed him should have had a slow death. And the sahib had no son; his name dies.”

“It costs a great deal to marry,” Graham said.

“Without doubt. All things are dear. Many times during the war I said to the Sahib, ‘Sahib, marriage is necessary. The Presence should have a son,’ but Davis Sahib said, ‘If I am killed it is better that I have no memsahib to grieve.’ Always I replied, ‘Sahib, that would be a hard grief, but your name would live.’ The sahib laughed. Now he is dead and there is—nothing.”

“You have a son?” the Englishman asked.

“Two sons,” said the Afridi. And he asked for the address of Dick’s mother that he might send her a letter of condolence, for on the personal expression of sympathy this fierce man set great store. His own tongue was Pushtu, and he spoke Urdu—the language of his service—but no English. Before they parted Muhammad Yusuf invited Graham to tea with him in his cramped quarters, and the British officer said he would come the following afternoon. The Afridi officer’s home was an eight days’ march from the city, but he wintered in Peshawar. He had been ill, and had summoned his wife and youngest son. Muhammad Yusuf was a big man in his country and lived as sumptuously as was possible for a tribesman of note in primitive surroundings. There were rifles, many beds, many quilts and poshteens and handsome, cruel knives in his home. He and his did

not lack arms. He was a warm man, Muhammad Yusuf; courteous and hospitable.

When Graham parted from the Afridi he felt the effect of his companionship: it was as though Muhammad Yusuf had made the very dust of Peshawar speak. To it the Londoner was utterly alien. All the savagery, callous indifference, and dirt repelled him. But its picturesque hardihood swaggering so close to machine-guns and aeroplanes attracted him. Impulse—that was the charm of the city; it moved spontaneously to its own compelling desires. One would doubtless grow sick of its escapades if too intimate with them. Graham thought he would not care to be a police officer there, enforcing the law. It was more satisfactory to be with the army, imbuing it with self-control. There was a great deal of hate in the city, a great deal of mutual respect in cantonments. When you came to think of it there was not a military officer who did not affirm innumerable times, ‘The men are splendid.’ And the women over and over again within their quiet homes murmured, ‘The children are wonderful.’ Well, that told its own tale. It is a fine achievement when men—armed men, young, of many races and full of devilments—attain to qualities that have splendour. There is a great future for a race whose children are wonderful. And you derive all that, thought Paul, only from the right spirit and the right mating. He passed an Eurasian clerk and pitied him. The British could have friendship, but not kinship, with Asiatics. Colour might only be skin-deep, but it was evidence which none save the colour-blind lacked. It generally gave fair warning of the predominance of certain qualities. Even in the same race, colour and temperament had an affinity; red-haired women did not attract him. Incarnation was the embodiment of thought.



And the diverse aspects of life made flesh gave the vital interest to existence. But Graham realised that interest was not a dry-as-dust business; it craved emotion. Suddenly he remembered his own quiet tidy mother in her widow's weeds, flinging a book aside with a sudden display of strange passion and saying to his startled, matronly aunt: 'They give me interesting books to read now. Interesting books when I want his kisses: his kisses, I tell you!' His boyish shyness had shrunk from that queer moment. He had sensed a breakdown of something necessary that had to be built up and maintained. Reserve, convention, fortitude were repaired again, the ravages of the widow's loss concealed. She lived her grief down as a mounted man rides down his enemy and wore herself, all frail, into a gentleness that was brittle as the softness of a dead moth's wing. Then she died very willingly.

Her son thought of her with new understanding, estranged from his wife. An Englishwoman flitted past him now on the flowering Mall. Short pleated skirt, woollen coat, silk stockings—a flash of golden hair under a close-fitting black hat. How detached she was from the business here which gave to each Englishman his definite job and his appointed place in the British scheme of things. Women represented no official service; were, in Peshawar, as apart from the day's work as a photograph on an author's writing-table. Most delicately guarded, their conduct was their sole personal manifestation of national pride and potency, as with prisoners of war. Graham hated, and positively raged, to think of British soldiers who had been captives in Asia. Of all cruel hardships to body and mind that was the least endurable, he thought. And with a sick pang he wondered if Prudence suffered humiliation and despair as the

prisoner of his purse and the captive of a marriage contract that bound her, here, in the East. She was neither dominant nor free. Would such a position breed hate in her? He felt indeed hateful; an utter failure.

The next day brought no letter from Prudence. Hang it all, he muttered, she might have written. He tore up the letter he had been about to post to her. His face wore a sulky look. There was a rumour of further reductions in the army; more officers were to be axed. It frightened him, and shifted the only firm ground under his feet. As the hour approached for him to keep his appointment with Muhammad Yusuf he felt restless, and for once his nature demanded excitement. As a rule, his steady temperament took life as it came. He was prone to term the over-vivacious excitable fools. Instinctively Paul would have liked to regard life as a sturdy jest. But he lost his sense of humour when Prudence did not send him one word. In two days she would return, but he wanted an immediate response to his craving.

He rode towards Peshawar City, his syce trotting at his charger's heels. Motor transport, private and official and military, passed him again and again, a swift and steady traffic. Children's perambulators moved in the Mall. Sergeants and their wives drove in tongas. A few people rode in merry little cavalcades that recalled the social life of the eighties and nineties. Even young Graham had witnessed a change of social custom, social amenities, in India. The old régime of wide hospitality, of British folk who were all mounted or drove their own pony and trap, had passed into memory's realm. On motor bicycles, the humble 'push bike,' or afoot, the junior officer and his wife were thrust aside on the

cantonment roads to make way for some rich Indian merchant in his expensive car. No longer did each Englishwoman find in a spacious bungalow, private compound, and pleasant garden temporary compensation for a shifting life of effort and endless wanderings. Many were crowded into hotels, cheap boarding-houses, and quarters in army mansions, where two or three small rooms was all the home-life they could call their own. It was as though pace had increased, space contracted. Would the British presently be travelling more quickly, but travelling third class? "If we become out-at-elbows we shall be elbowed out here," mused Graham.

He passed then from that swiftly moving thing, an army, to that cumbersome and straggling wayfarer, a civil population. Inside the Edward's gate it drifted to and fro. A camel swung a ragged tribesman aloft; his quilted peaked cap, great dark beard and the torn shoulders of his embroidered coat swayed past jutting balconies of fragile upper stories, and bells hanging from the gaunt beast's neck sounded sullenly. Little grey donkeys came tripping out, their docile patient faces looking strangely gentle compared with the handsome rosy-cheeked youth who whacked them like the callous ruffian that he was. Everywhere brown eyes turned like passionate bees in faces darkly alert. Though the roar of voices in the crowded street was unabating these big men, who were mostly wrapped in sheepskins, who crudely adorned and armed themselves, and who went acatering for appetite at the food stalls with much zest, had not eloquent faces. They did not question nor answer life. Rather, they observed without discernment, challenged without criticism. If ever a crowd of hardy fellows proclaimed itself uneducated this slowly moving throng of Mahomedans did so.

There were clerks in the shops, students in the streets, but the mass were men of strong limbs, active muscles, habits and desires which were the result of local environment and breeding unchecked by any science of instruction. Though the spirit of avarice bargained at every stall, this manly multitude left no mean impression on the mind: it seemed surprisingly generous not to loot the produce of smaller men. The picture printed on the imagination by just those hundreds of huge, dirty brown hands was one of awful strength, as though nature had indeed made fingers to fight, to strangle, and to grip.

A police officer came riding through the crowd of tribesmen which cleft for him with an attractive courtesy. The crowd had a mysterious quality of attraction. It was hard to say why the squalid ignorance, filth, and savagery of it were not the determining factors and did not render it repulsive. It magnetised by its rugged simplicity, by its bronze force, by its very lack of coherent plot and plan. And the famous officer who passed through it—known far and wide for his lightning movements, his energy and optimism, his alarming good luck—looked down on burly men who greeted his smile and jest with cordial laughs that disclosed the one calm white thing about them, their clean and beautiful teeth. In this proximity lay risk, adventure, endless possibilities. Graham exchanged greetings with the officer and passed on, keenly conscious of the strange city's personality. "That fellow is a white man," he said to himself; "a pale man would be as much use here as a fainting fit in a cavalry charge."

Graham dismounted inside the courtyard of a fruit merchant's straggling building which had its humble doorway on a narrow side street. Here was the typical scene that greeted the eyes of every prosperous

Peshawari when he reached his homestead. The entrance to the courtyard was through an archway : its double doors of unpainted wood were roughly carved and laden with tenacious bolts and bars. A dirty puddle trapped the feet of the unwary. A goat was tethered in the unpaved square, and a grumbling camel knelt disdainfully in a corner. The cold evening sunlight drew a faint smell of fruit from boxes and bales that littered the enclosure, and three big dogs rose and made hearing a sense of horror with their insulting chorus until silenced by the subadar's ferocious bellow. Muhammad Yusuf led Graham into a store-room which presented a dim disorder of saddlery, ledgers, firewood, and chests deep in dust, and thence up a matchwood staircase to an upper room which looked on the south into the courtyard and on the north into a narrow lane scarcely six feet wide that smelt like an open drain. A small carpet of no great value lay upon the floor's bare boards, and a hard little bolster with a hukha by its side completed the commonplace eastern picture. Two chairs and a camp table occupied the centre of the chilly room, as foreign intruders. An enamel teapot, a china bowl filled with crushed sugar and hungry flies, a plate of raisins and almonds, a dish of sweet native cakes, and a jug of milk with coagulated skin thick upon it represented the subadar's sincere hospitality. A dish of oranges, golden and fragrant, contributed a treasure of beauty. Here for half an hour the two officers sat and talked. Not in these surroundings, but elsewhere, they had ground in common. The stately and menaced progress of a convoy in war time, over seas rough or without ripple, illuminated by blaze of sun and shine of moon, or dark as death—these soldiers had shared that much of the sailor's war. They had known

camp and hospital, picket and march, attack and defence in Europe, Africa, and Asia, and they talked of those events as the sun went down and the mullahs called to prayer. Into the subadar's house Graham had brought again the thing chosen by an Afridi lad thirty years ago: personal touch with the sahib, with his mind, with his orders, with his amazing dangers.

If Graham knew boredom in the Afridi's company it was chiefly because the inactivity of sitting by a little tea-table was irksome. To the man of the East a social occasion was gratifyingly complete if a distinguished guest was entertained, but to the British officer this formality was obvious and dull. In cantonments every home had a hostess, whereas in Peshawar city a Mahomedan woman's seclusion was terribly strict. Here Graham was in Muhammad Yusuf's world, but not in his home. Somewhere quite close his wife lived and moved in a zenana that was forbidden ground to the sahib and to all other men. There the Afridi was a king whose only subject was a woman. Graham, indifferent, thought perhaps there was little to boast of in that; but, being very honest with himself, he faced the fact that his own humiliation, inflicted by the attitude of Prudence, was here intensified through his consciousness of how poor a figure a flouted husband would cut in the fierce eyes of his host and his host's clan.

It seemed monotonous in that bare room with the men's deep voices exchanging views till suddenly the Afridi's breath was caught by a thin cloud of smoke from Graham's cigarette and he was shaken by a fit of coughing. It mastered him, stained his big face purple, forced blood into his eyeballs, and struck shattering echoes from the lane and the courtyard. The paroxysm was prolonged: it looked as though

Muhammad Yusuf must suffocate. His indignant eyes held no reflection of thought, became unseeing, a mere blind stare. Graham, at first politely concerned, grew alarmed and felt awkwardly inexperienced and helpless. When the coughing ceased he came forward very gently to the Afridi and begged him to leave his prim chair and stretch himself on the carpet. Sweat was pouring from the subadar's scarred face.

"I am ill again," Muhammad Yusuf muttered despairingly.

"You'll be all right," Graham said, and patted the bowed shoulder of the older man. "I'll get Murphy Sahib to come and see you. He is a very clever doctor and will quickly cure you. Better lie down now; I'll help you." Perhaps his kind pleasant voice soothed and cheered Muhammad Yusuf, crumpled up and stricken. Something more strange than the East was in the room now.

For a moment the two officers stood by the table with Graham's firm hand under Muhammad Yusuf's elbow, then with a horrid, inarticulate sound the Afridi staggered against the table, which overturned. Graham's clutch caught the man's whole weight, just in time, and he got him, struggling and in terrible pain, down on to the carpet. It was difficult to keep cool close to that struggle and that pain, but the Londoner wrote something in pencil on a leaf of his pocket book and went to the window and shouted to his syce. The man stood by Graham's pony, looking up at the room from which had come perturbing noises. A faithful little fellow, he alone, of those who remained invisible and attentive, had looked up incautious and alert. Graham threw him down the scrap of paper. "Take that to Murphy Sahib and ride quickly. The subadar is ill," Graham com-

manded, and turned resolutely but with reluctant horror to his tormented and inarticulate comrade.

As he turned the noise of his pony clattering out of the courtyard was drowned by the agonised shout of Muhammad Yusuf calling on someone by name. In the effort of that outburst his last battle seemed to be accomplished. A suffering stillness followed. And while the Englishman, distracted, stood above his unendurable pain, a little door creaked open and the Afridi's wife entered in obedience to the summons wrung from her lord by torture.

She was a big woman whose feet and hands moved majestically. Her heavy garments were made of thick handwoven material and her sari fell back from her stately head in folds of brown and rust. Wheat-coloured smooth skin, firm lips, an aristocratic nose, and brown eyes artificially darkened but fringed by nature with sweeping black lashes, formed a countenance that broke into the room as a pale wonder. Massive silver hung about her as though she needed armour and possessed wealth. In her stillness, in her strength, in her superb health there was a compelling interest. With one glance she saw all.

She came and she went. It was done with no elfin elusiveness. It was as though a great sailing ship had come riding in upon a storm and then vanished.

Muhammad Yusuf kept his staring eyes upon the little door. It opened again and this time the woman held in her beautiful hand the medicine his terrible need demanded. As he saw it he died.

A hundred flies buzzed over the spilt milk, and the teapot, prostrate after its unseemly jaunt, lay on its side with its lid off. Oranges had rolled gaily to the corners of the room. The cigarette still smoked its little ghostly breath. And Graham stooped reverently



over the subadar, recognising death. The last golden light of day caught his face, close cropped hair, his white collar, his tweed suit, and forced them into prominence. He kept on looking at the dead soldier because he could not look at the widow for fear of offending against the customs of her people and her sense of dignity.

"He is dead," said the woman in a deep voice.

Permitted speech with her, the British officer, his gaze always averted, replied, "Alas, he is dead. He coughed and then he suddenly became ill as one in great pain."

"It was thus before," she told him in her guttural Pushtu. "The hakim in the city gave him this medicine. Greatly desiring this medicine, he called me. I came."

"I understand," Graham made reply. "And if I can be of no further service I will now depart, since your customs do not permit my presence here with you." All the time her great eyes were fixed upon him. But she, too, was acutely aware of the presence of death. She was intent, stilled, queerly stealthy, like something wild and young moving in a jungle by night.

"Huzoor," she murmured through her magnificent and eager lips.

He could not leave the dead soldier in mere cold decorum. He said very simply to the widow, "The subadar was my friend. He leaves a good name to his sons. If I can be of any assistance to his sons let them send me word." He passed her, moving with the characteristic gait of a young English officer, and picked up his cap and stick. Bareheaded, at the door, he asked her whether he should send anyone to her assistance.

"No, do not call, sahib. There are kinsmen and

servants near," the Afridi woman replied. She seemed with deadly swiftness to have accepted her widowhood.

Graham uttered the conventional and courteous salutation of a departing guest, using the phrase he would have employed in addressing Muhammad Yusuf since he knew no other. She made no reply, and as he descended the rotten stairs her voice was raised in a right royal clamour. In the courtyard he paused, uncertain as to whether he should call a neighbour and inform him of the sudden calamity which had befallen the house of Muhammad Yusuf. But the place had assumed a secretiveness, no one was approachable or visible. Graham reflected that he knew nothing of the cause of the subadar's death; he might have been poisoned. And he, Graham, had been alone with a purdah woman of good birth, a fact which might prove infinitely dangerous to her if disclosed. Silently he left by the archway, and as he walked away he heard an opening and shutting of heavy doors, while from the upper chamber there broke the conventional wailing of a mourner.

An hour later he sat with Major Murphy in his bungalow. The syce had failed to find the doctor and Graham had run across him in the Mall. When fortified by a stout whisky and soda he gave a brief account of the incident. Characteristically he understated every emotional experience that it had inflicted, but Murphy gauged accurately enough that Graham was not unmoved. "Old Paul has a big heart," he said to himself. Aloud he remarked, "Nasty thing to see. It sounds like angina pectoris. That, probably, is the explanation."

"He suffered infernally," Graham muttered, and added, "I don't know how you fellows can stand a sight like that." After a moment's pause he con-

tinued, "Muhammad Yusuf told me his eldest son was at school, and that the mother was dead. So the woman who brought him the medicine is his second wife, I suppose. There is a little chap of three, who must be her child. I did not know what to do about it when she came in. It was all so sudden. He was beside himself with pain, or he would not have yelled for her. And I could not beat a retreat and leave him, although I was perfectly useless to him, poor fellow. The woman seemed as cool as a cucumber. But the noise that broke out after I left sounded frantic. One knows nothing of these people. I am not sure whether the fact that she and I were thrown together makes a perilous scandal for her, or does not matter tuppence."

"The man who violates the purdah in Peshawar city risks his life and other lives," said Murphy.

"That's the idea," agreed Graham. "But, though hard-and-fast rules exist, individual action is the exception that proves the rule, I imagine. It is a queer feeling when you don't know the ropes with a woman, don't know how she wants to be treated, or what will get her into trouble. It gave me cold feet, I swear it did."

"You're a gay sort of Romeo," chuckled Murphy. "I expect the lady was plain and prudent, or you'd have a different tale to tell."

"Rot," growled Graham.

"Well, well," murmured the doctor. "Lose your commission over that kind of thing mighty quick. Great rapture for the seditious press. 'British officer worms his way into the house of an Afridi subadar—Afridi found dead and his wife and the Englishman discovered together.'"

"Quite so," said Graham dryly.

At dawn the next day Subadar Muhammad Yusuf

was carried out of the city and buried. His internment had the dignity of a great simplicity. There was fragrance over all the earth when they covered him with the pale soil in his shallow grave. The surprise of another day startled sleep from the valley and the city was spiritual with a palpitating call to prayer. There was an acrid smell of wood fires and cooking in the cold and shaded streets, but on the house-tops sunshine glittered, and there the air was pure as the snows on the distant mountains. At noon Peshawar was at full tide again, and noisy with its strange population. By sunset it hushed its clamour once more and broke into separate eddies, secret conclaves, hidden fires, and from dawn to dark the widow of Subadar Muhammad Yusuf hugged the memory of Graham Sahib.

Paul was brooding over the return of Prudence—dreaded and desired and distrusted—when from the gloom of his twilight garden a squalid Mahomedan youth advanced towards him with a deep salaam and proffered an envelope. It was a cheap affair and looked like a bill from the bazaar. Graham opened it and read the letter it contained, the purport of which was that his presence was urgently and immediately needed in the subadar's dwelling. Puzzled, he questioned the lad, "Who gave you this note?"

But the poor creature was unable to speak. He could only roll his deformed tongue about in his mouth and utter meaningless sounds.

"Is the subadar's brother in his house?" asked Graham.

The half-wit made a gesture which might have signified an affirmation.

"I don't believe he is," mused Graham. "I wonder what the devil is up." Aloud he commanded,

"You may go. Give my salaams." He turned and went back into his bungalow. It was almost time for him to have his bath and change for dinner. Prudence would arrive before midnight even if the train were late. He did not want to think about her arrival. Should he embrace her, or utterly neglect her? What a farce their relationship had become! He was her lover, her husband; how could he continue indefinitely to treat her like an affectionate kinsman? He was sore, angry, hesitating, and mortified. The long hours till she would be there beside him on the threshold suddenly seemed unendurable. He might dine at the mess and lose his dissatisfactions by distracting his thoughts from his private life. He looked at the clock. No, he was too late. On a swift impulse he called his new orderly, Nawab Khan. The hawk-like Awan entered the room treading firmly on his big bare feet, and saluted.

"Look here, Nawab," said young Graham, "Subadar Muhammad Yusuf died yesterday when I was with him."

"This I heard, sahib," said Nawab Khan. "The syce looked everywhere for the doctor sahib, and did not find him."

"The subadar was a good man," said Graham, "and there is trouble in his house."

"Without doubt, great trouble. It is thus when a man dies," the Awan said, and by his unconsciousness of triviality presented the remark as wholly free from triteness.

"He has a brother. Do you know his name?"

"I heard he had a brother, but his name I do not know. The subadar was a Pathan and not of my people, sahib," replied the orderly.

"Do I not know that?" said Graham with a broad grin. "I was in your illaqua last month with

the memsahib, and there were many badmashes there. The Pathans are good men."

"There are badmashes everywhere, huzoor. *Some* Pathans are good men," growled Nawab Khan. And the blue and brown eyes met in a good-natured and appreciative encounter. The Indian soldier knew full well how fond Graham was of his double company. Graham looked at the note again. It implored him in the name of Fazal Shah to make haste and come to-night. "The brother's name is Fazal Shah," he told Nawab Khan.

"Perhaps. I know not," said the orderly.

"He asks me to go there at once," Paul said. "Tell the syce to bring my pony round. I will dine at 8.30 on my return."

"The Presence will go now?" Nawab Khan exclaimed.

"Now. Make haste," said Graham, suddenly impatient.

He grew momentarily more impatient until he swung himself into the saddle. Then, riding to the darkening city, he felt gay. It was jolly to be a young horseman out for adventure. He knew there was adventure in that summons. It dared him to take a risk, and he took it because he would not shirk the consequences of having been present when the subadar had so frantically perished, and of having been alone with an Afridi woman in Peshawar city. There was mystery here, and Graham could think of no one who was able to show him the moves of this game, or reveal what was at stake. For his action strayed off the conventional military roads, off the normal official ground. And he was mentally wary and cautious as regards Fazal Shah. He carried his revolver inside his coat. As he passed into the city his heart saluted the spot where Dick was murdered.

He, Graham, was consciously giving fate its chance to set Prudence free, to-night. His death would absolve her from her vow, from her legal tie. She could be a merry widow.

All the policemen marked him as he rode through the city, and the tribesmen scowled at him. The uneasy syce followed faithfully. Sounds of string instruments came blithely from a balcony. A tom-tom pulsed close by when Paul reached the fruit merchant's double doors. They were closed, and he rapped on them with his stick and for answer dogs barked.

Then with much fumbling bolts and bars were drawn, and the dumb, half-witted youth flung the doors wide, and Graham clattered into the courtyard. One oil-lamp hung above the chained and howling watch-dogs.

"Is Fazal Shah present?" enquired Graham.

There was none to answer and his syce suddenly informed him, "Fazal Shah is a child."

Graham began to feel rather a fool. But the dumb lad was obviously waiting to conduct him to the upper chamber he had visited before. As he dismounted he looked round the courtyard and its shadowy buildings. Through the chinks of wooden shutters light was shining in three windows; two were above the archway and a third was over a door to the right of the entrance. "Does the fruit merchant live there?" Graham asked his syce, and pointed with his whip to the light.

"He lives there, sahib," said the syce.

"I shall not be long. Keep the lantern well trimmed," said Graham, and he turned to follow the squalid lad.

As Graham disappeared and the syce obediently trimmed the lantern which he had carried, a stout

figure pushed its way in through the archway and walked over to the syce. The pony's breath made a little white cloud in the cold air, and one bright stirrup caught the light. The watch-dogs presently ceased to bark, and in the obliterating darkness of an unlit corner the camel made uncouth sounds.

At the top of the stairs, which now appeared to ascend into the night itself, another lantern suddenly swung its light over Graham's head and shoulders as he emerged into the room where Muhammad Yusuf had died. He saw to his astonishment that it was carried by a toothless old hag who salaamed profoundly.

"Is Fazal Shah here?" Graham asked.

"He is here, he is here," the woman muttered. She placed the lantern on a table and the dreadful dumb boy hung the oil-lamp he had brought on a nail in the whitewashed wall.

"Is Fazal Shah the subadar's brother?" Graham demanded.

"Huzoor, the brother comes. There is a brother," the hag told him; as she repeatedly salaamed the lamp-light played over her like fire over a shipwreck.

"The old dear seems uncommonly pleased to see me," Graham thought with distaste, and he asked peremptorily, "Where is the subadar's brother? I am here, and there is no one to receive me."

"He comes," the weak and servile voice assured him and then broke into ejaculatory prayers. To Graham it was intensely disagreeable to see those claw-like brown hands feebly endeavouring to embrace his boots.

"Tell him to come at once," said Graham consulting his watch. "I will only wait five minutes. Do you understand? Five minutes." Mumbling and propitiating, the ancient dame withdrew by the



little door leading to the zenana. Graham knew that he would have left at once if he had not been conscious that there was something to run from. Was the woman, too, in danger ?

He welcomed the reopening of that door, but was exasperated when the dumb fellow shuffled in. The enamel teapot, its lid bent, appeared again and the whole outfit was set upon the table as on the previous day. Graham's recollection of the subadar's distressed hands and congested face was too painfully vivid to permit him the solace of a cigarette. He sat for ten long minutes puzzled and glum. There was a dark silence except for the feverish beating of little drums.

Graham went to the window from which he saw his syce, but not the man squatting near him, who was hidden by the pony. "Ask if the subadar's brother is here," called Graham.

"Whom shall I ask, sahib?" called back the syce.

"There is a light over there. Enquire from the merchant," ordered Graham.

"Huzoor, there dwells the family of the merchant. They will not permit me to enter. How can I enquire from them? There is none from whom I may enquire," was the answer.

"Well then, shout for Fazal Shah, you fool," commanded Graham, suddenly waxing wroth.

The syce lifted up his voice and filled every corner of the courtyard with the reiterated cry, "Fazal Shah! Oh, Fazal Shah-h-h-h." The pony shifted restlessly, the camel grunted, the dogs barked afresh, and framed in the window Graham made an enormous silhouette of a man. There was no reply, and above the hubbub Graham shouted an order to make ready the pony. The syce stood up to take its rug off,

and behind Graham with incredible stealth the little door opened slowly, slowly.

Graham, intently observant, stepped back from the window and saw through the dim doorway, beyond the hag, a tall, veiled form. He was aware that she made an urgent gesture to the old servant, who came forward, mouthing in some horrid excitement, and drew creaking shutters across the open window. Paul knew that this was the moment for discretion and departure, but he stubbornly held his ground. Not yet had he fled from a woman, and this puzzling one *might* need his help. The servant passed out again, fumbling and stumbling against the draperies of his motionless hostess, who now advanced into the room. In the heart of the most fierce city in India the Englishman and the Afridi widow were alone together for the second time, while the dead soldier lay in his last trench, thrust out of action and all unconcerned.

The silence was thick as honey. Graham broke it. "Who is Fazal Shah?" he persisted.

Full and passionate came her voice. "He is the youngest son of the Subadar."

It was probable that her child, aged three, was snugly asleep, a warm brown thing like a nut in a basket. Graham looked away from the woman no longer; he confronted her veil sternly and he demanded, "Is the subadar's brother here?"

"He comes later," she told him.

He lifted up the note for her to see. Her eyes blazed through the skilfully manipulated folds of her sari. "Who sent this to me in the name of Fazal Shah?"

"I sent it," was her answer, making great love to him.

No prig, he accepted that reply with a big astonish-

ment. But, playing the game by all the social rules of her existence that he knew or guessed, he investigated further. Had this woman need of protection from other men; suspicious, blackmailing, threatening men? "Why did you send for me?" he asked very kindly.

"My eyes desired to see you," she told him. As simply as that.

The Afridi woman was momentarily checked by delay of question and answer. This compelling sahib drew replies from her though she scarcely grasped his curiously pronounced Pushtu. What value had words? That she was present was her declaration. Nought else was necessary. No need, surely, to explain to eyes and senses. She had seen him—his fairness, his youth, his strength, intensified by his fame as a white man—and to comply with the demands of her desire she had plotted and planned and dared all day long. But this moment required no further preparation. They were now alone together. At midnight Gulab Khan would arrive and would be told that the sahib had come to see him, understanding the conventional petition in the name of little Fazal Shah; had seen no one, been angered, and departed. She would lie and risk her life on the lie. She would trust the hag and maybe perish for that. Grief she had none. Muhammad Yusuf's ill-health and advancing years had repelled her when she saw her bridegroom on the day of her marriage. When she had struck her step-son, Muhammad Yusuf had beaten her. This Afridi woman was neither sophisticated nor timid; she was ardent and a great dare-devil; able to endure hardship with fortitude; but knowing no better way than this way to capture bliss, and satisfy no other living being but herself.

"I am here," she said magnificently, and unveiled to him.

And for a moment he saw himself as fortunate, his luck as old and gay as Adam's, his adventure as romantic as the East. Standing with his hands on his hips he smiled his jolly admiration at her wild face, and she smiled back at him as though life's triumph broke through life's dust in those parted smiling lips of theirs. But Graham's fingers suddenly felt his revolver. He had come prepared to fight, not to dally. He was at odds with existence. And he saw with a clearness which acted quickly like a mental discovery, that to love here was to lose all mastery over that wife of his; a woman greater than this tall one, dearer than this generous one. If in a Mahomedan enclosure he took what was so enchantingly displayed, he must return to unbar the doors of his house for Prudence. This thing could not be done and the other left undone. The Afridi clanswoman could not bring additional experience to his personal history without depriving him of the more triumphant victory he strove to inscribe there. Stubbornly, rather boyishly, with his face still indulgently laughing, he shook his fair, close-cropped head.

Untamed, but submissive with the slavishness of her primitive instincts, the woman said aghast, "You are not pleased, huzoor?"

"You are beautiful," Graham answered, and saw her stir from head to foot. "You are the most beautiful of women. But I am a married man. Such are our customs." He added to himself, "And you may think what you like, my dear."

She had no nimble brain; she did not readily conceive herself as rejected and this man as resolute in refusal. There was nothing to prepare her for his sudden determination to expel her from this room

before he left it. Found in the zenana she would be safer, he thought. When he approached her and let his hands fall upon her splendid shoulders she was only conscious of his white face above hers signalling a warning that every movement of his would be exquisitely strange. To find herself, not crouching against his heart, but swiftly turned right-about so that she faced the little door, was a dizzy bewilderment out of which she failed to gather up her resistance. When she realised his intention of pushing her through the door it was too late. But even so he found the struggle she made formidable, wildly exciting, though hardly the fight he had come for. It was a moment of intense wrestling, of thudding feet and of a torrent of passionate words from her, the sense of which came to him as a scent comes, whole and untranslatable. When, using all his athletic skill, he had tossed her, defeated but uninjured, into the darkness beyond the door, he had barely shut it and bolted it before she had flung her strength against it. There was murder in her heart now. For a brief space she on her side, and he on his, beat against the door, wood dividing shoulder from shoulder. "No, you don't, you young devil," muttered Graham, and mopped his brow.

As he went downstairs the throbbing of the tomtoms was not thicker in the air than the beating of his heart in his body. All seemed dark to him, shut in, frightfully disorderly and dense. He was combative the moment the syce's companion was revealed to him by the light of the lantern. "Who are you?" he challenged.

"Police, sahib," said the man respectfully. Looking at him closer, Graham discerned his uniform.

"So you are," he muttered. "Why are you here?"

"Sahib, I thought help might be required," he said vaguely and bashfully.

"He is a good man," murmured the syce.

Graham chinked some silver into his hand. "Tomorrow tell these people that I waited long for the brother of the subadar and he did not come," he said. "I have seen only servants."

"Perhaps I shall not find any of this household, sahib," the man said.

"No matter," rejoined Graham. He mounted, and the pony, cold and high-spirited, danced about the courtyard under the light of the moon which had risen high in the sky. From Muhammad Yusuf's quarters there rang out a wailing that was not mournful, but had in it the awful anger of a woman, the savage indignation of the Tirah.

The city was all shining discs of light in lamp and puddle, and tossing etchings of roofs against a mild, pearly moon. Where there had been music there were now thick laughter and an intermittent tinkle that drivelled. Graham shook off the streets' shadows at the Edward's Gate as a man may ride free of a fog into clear air. "She was a very powerful woman," Graham acknowledged to himself, "and off her balance. I was out of my depth there, and I hope she'll come to no harm, poor devil." When he passed a mess in cantonment an Indian band was playing "*Zakhmi Dil*," and the words of that Song of Mira came to him through the bold night, uttering the Pathan's sense of romance and pride:

"I lay a sword at thy feet. Do Thou, Beloved, think ever of me.  
Morning and evening I lie at thy feet. Least am I among thy  
Cavaliers.

"Let a poet make his own verse; if he sing it in the air of another  
he must call himself a thief.

Whatever song thou singest, give praise to the Almighty, Hell  
to those who slander!"

He was very tired when he reached his home and his wrist was painfully swollen. But when Prudence arrived there she found a lover. Eager, compelling, amazingly oblivious of quarrels, confident of his right.

Bruising the grain of all she is,  
She kneads a little loaf of bread,  
Mingling her life's strange mysteries—  
Loins, bosom, heart and head.

M. DONEY.

A FORTNIGHT later Prudence got out of a tonga at the door of her bungalow and entered her sitting-room in anger. She flung herself into an armchair and sat there passionately brooding. Events passed through her stormy mind in swift review. Here she had philandered with Ronald Warwick, while he had exercised his influence over her to exaggerate all her worldly day-dreams. He had been a shopman displaying costly wares to her envious eyes, tempting her empty purse. In this room she had spent gay hours with Dick, enjoying his honest admiration, always conscious of his strict code. It had been Warwick, not friendly Dick, who had revealed to her a need of friendship's stimulating enthusiasms. She had been sitting that day in the very same chair where she sat now testing her vivid memories. Here she had planned her little social triumphs, and revelled in Trench's homage. In this room she had contrived her economies and hungered for luxury. She reconstructed the scene when Montgomery, a ship that passed in the night, had argued with her, lectured and contradicted, and finally beaten her with a kiss. That had been his definite desertion, for he had dropped her. Lingering in Peshawar for



a week, he had not visited her again, and all her plans to reassert her dignity had come to nothing. She pictured her comings and goings, how she had started hot-foot for Chuha Saidan Shah, and returned heavy laden with a burden of knowledge of other lives, other ways of living and triumphing. Nothing had been quite the same since then. Prudence entered again into the spirit of her quarrels with Paul. There had been the first occasion when she had asked for a separation in order that she might climb alone and unimpeded over the barriers which poverty in an Indian cantonment erected between her and her ambitions. She had been defeated that time. Their encounter of clashing wills had ended in an encounter of passionate lips. Paul possessed that queer power to overwhelm her emotionally. Then had come her outcry for a divorce which he had withheld from her, denying her freedom and denouncing her motives. There had followed a period of personal renunciation on his part that had forced her to realise the sterile materialism of her outlook on life. And she had endured great buffetings from each member of her intimate circle. May Molesworth had never responded frankly to her overtures and Lady Trench had refused to admit her to real friendship. There was something innately rebellious in her that jarred the worldly wisdom of these worldly women. Neither Trench, Warwick, nor Dick had given her whole-hearted love. But none of them were in her shabby shoes; Trench had power, Warwick possessed wealth, Dick was a girl's lover and had died. May Molesworth and Eleanor Trench were satisfied with their circumstances, and were not driven by her wild craving for opportunity and abundance; were not blinded by their own beauty, were not caught in their youth by the tangled web

of sudden social changes as she was. That afternoon she had sought out Isabella Croft, whose success in Peshawar had eclipsed her own. At the first approach to confidences the older, more subtle, woman had snubbed her. "You were described to me as the wife who consults everyone as to the quickest exit from her marriage entanglement. I have no advice to offer you. Other people's domestic difficulties bore me terribly, I am afraid." Prudence was still smarting from Mrs. Croft's disdain. And for the mental mortification which her memories inflicted she saw but one remedy; the achievement of dignity. A harvest of knowledge garnered by her experience in the Khyber Pass, in the Salt Range, in Taxila, enabled her to realise that only by moral dignity could she command the prestige which her wounded pride craved. "I will have it!" cried imperious Prudence.

She saw now that she was in a weak position because she had lived as a house divided against itself. If she had given her heart to Paul it would have made a kingdom strong enough to hold its own against the markets of the world. If she had held her soul for God she would have sublimated all her scale of values. But she had boasted that she was heartless and had called her soul her own, and stood hankering and repining by the gates of desire. "It would have been wiser in a worldly way if I had boldly betrayed Paul, instead of just planning how to desert him discreetly," she admitted. "But how thankful I am I did not take that course. Now I start afresh without having unfaithfulness on my conscience."

Prudence was aware of a new unity in herself. Strange and compelling interests, which endowed her life with a perception of mystery and the super-

natural, roused the latent energies of her character. It was as yet only a fitful enthusiasm, but it animated her imagination with a zeal no longer sordidly acquisitive. For the first time in her life Prudence aspired after virtue with a dawning admiration for high ideals. "Here I am in this inexplicable world, with a body that is an odd box of tricks to me. I have all sorts of urgent needs to satisfy. I must eat and sleep and wash and dress. Certain people are companionable to my mind and I seek their society. I see beauty and desire it. Movement is necessary to me: so I want horses and motors and a good band when I dance. And I get sick of myself—tiresome old Prudence Graham—and become fond of people. Then someone dies and I grow wild with curiosity and fear as to what happens to us all when we die. Being a European I turn to Christianity; not to the Hindu deities, nor Mahomed, nor Buddha. It is not silly and sentimental—I can feel that—it is thrilling and strong and difficult. Prayer, and worship, and grace might just make the whole difference; develop my soul, open up communications, direct me towards the real truth, give me the necessary powers. But there's a lot of bother and discipline in it. That would completely put me off if I did not suspect that practice makes perfect. When the kingdom of heaven is within you it stands for happiness. So unless there is a catch somewhere it *must* be possible for me to acquire a mental attitude which ensures satisfaction with life. Only I must have faith in a Something that is neither mammon nor man: and I must love, and I must make a sound use of my mind and body." As she vigorously addressed herself her irritability was appeased and her gaiety of temperament reasserted its control. When the bearer announced that a sahib gave salaams she

went forward to greet Major Murphy with an eagerness which was not free from nervous excitement.

The compound was very still, bathed in serene sunshine. Looking out from the steps of the verandah the bearer's dull brown eyes saw the white half-moon of the drive from gate to gate, its bleached dust marked by the footprints of birds. Squat palms in big tubs cast a dwarfed shade. A cactus, like a grotesque and mediæval weapon, was hung with glittering spiders' webs. Oleander drenched the air with scent, and a magnolia's blossoms wore their thick petals as though clothed in white vestments. Roses and violets and a jewelled hedge of sweet peas filled the little garden's borders to the very brim with a fantasy of colour and fragrance. And the bearer cared for none of these things. He marked the British regiment marching down the Mall, noted the idle and tardy performances of the khansamah returning from the bazaar, watched the doctor sahib's chauffeur do something to the motor: his interests were marvellously narrow. But he was a ceremonious being, and enjoyed salaaming to Major Murphy when he broke out of the drawing-room in his usual haste. The doctor, conscious of Paul's achievement in the garden's ardent fertility, whistled gaily as he left his wife. "It is the best thing that could have happened though they have not got a shilling to spare," he said to himself, and gave a little thoughtful smile as he remembered his last talk in the Grahams' bungalow. Paul had had an adventure then right off the map. Though the civil surgeon knew something of the laws of the purdah, and of the exceptions to those laws, he had wondered once or twice if goodwill had protected, or enmity denounced, the conduct of the Afridi woman in her fierce and isolated world. Graham would never hear.

The doctor passed Paul at the gate and felt warmly towards him. He was a good sort and sound to the core. Well, there was a big thing awaiting him now. However prosaically you diluted its wonder, and diminished its significance, it *was* a big thing.

Graham went into his house with another attack of fever stirring in his veins. He knew he was in for it and could not escape from it, and he swore roundly under his breath. It was not the right frame of mind in which to encounter a tense look in the face of Prudence. He wondered what she was going to spring upon him this time.

"Hullo, my warrior," was her greeting. "Come here this moment and make love to me."

Well, she was amiable at all events, but, as usual, a little difficult.

"I've no time now," said Graham.

Prudence had not noticed the signs of malaria, and his reply greatly vexed her. But she was not to be set aside so easily. "There is no time like the present," she cried. "And all I want you to do is to sit down immediately in that chair and tell me that I am adorable. Then I shall tell you something equally startling."

Reluctantly, for the sake of peace, Graham came to a halt. "You are adorable, of course," he said in exasperated tones. "Now what is it?"

She grew suddenly wistful. "That's not quite the right note," she murmured. "However, you odd creature, you never were a troubadour. We are going to have a baby."

It sent his world spinning round him. His responsibilities were increased a hundred per cent. and his contribution to life was transformed, and beyond all calculation. "Does the doctor say so?" he demanded; very grave and impressed.

"He says so and I say so," Prudence informed him.

"I am glad," Graham declared. "What about you?"

She leant forward, her elbows on her knees, her face in her hands. "You take it easy, don't you?" she remarked.

He considered that. "Well, I don't know. It is natural to be glad," he said. "But it is a serious business these days. When I have taken it in I've no doubt I shall scratch my head over it. All the same I know I am glad."

"It is all right for you then," said Prudence to the breadwinner.

Graham would have liked to say no more. He could feel the shivering fit coming on. But a tenderness in him sought expression. Going over to his wife he pulled her dark head against him, and with his big fingers caressing her hair, he muttered, "Poor girl, you'll have to take care of yourself."

A remote whisper reached his ear, "This ought not to have happened, you know."

The reproach stung him sharply. He stood on his defence at once, saying, "Nature meant it to happen. I know I promised you that we'd be nothing to each other, but you met me half-way when you came back that night." Suddenly he became angry. "Why shouldn't we have a child? You've indulged in the most ridiculous theories about marriage. Now we've got down to real life at last."

She lifted her mischievous young face and laughed up at him. "Did I say I regretted it?"

"You are glad, too, then?" Graham exclaimed, much relieved.

She rose and stood at a distance from him. "I am excited," Prudence admitted. "After all, this is

an experience that expands life. My heart goes snap, snap, snap when I realise that I am a mother. Two lives in one—no, three lives in one. You and the child—and me.”

“You don’t feel ill, do you?” Paul enquired. He was in a sense in awe of her. She was mysteriously altered. Her vivid realization of the transformation communicated itself to him. Prudence was facing physical changes and developments without flinching, and he was impressed. Her slender body, with its fragile appearance of emptiness and its energetic poise, accentuated the marvel of her adventure. Graham wanted to be reassured that all was well with her.

“I feel perfectly glorious at present,” she told him, with a shy gesture that indicated her sense of helplessness. “Nine months. That’s what beats me. All those weeks and all those odd changes, and doctor, nurse, expense, fuss, and *then* a baby. *Is* it a son, or a daughter, and which do you want?”

“A son,” Graham said promptly. “But a girl would be nice.”

“And you can’t send a son to Eton, or any decent public school. If you died the girl would have forty pounds a year and your big nose. Oh Paul, why aren’t you a rich and magnificent peer of the realm? Dash it all, I want the world to acknowledge that my son is of immense importance. And he is not. He is just an extravagance.” Suddenly she went to Paul and shook him by the shoulders and hid her face against his medal ribbons. “Make me love you, you ruffian. Look what your love has done to me!”

In a moment of his ardour she was caught up into happiness, but when she freed herself from his embrace she walked away to the window as though

once more conscious of alarming circumstances and of her own solitary fate. "It is not dignified," she said over her shoulder to Paul, "my not loving you and my intention to be childless—and then this. In every contract to which I have been party I have been as blind as a bat. I have let myself in for more than I bargained each time." Wheeling round she confronted him with the light drawing dark flashes from her black hair, her pale face dimmed by shadows, and her voice conveying to Paul her deep emotion. "You have won, you know. As far as the legal tie goes the knot holds good for always now. I wanted separation, I wanted divorce, and you refused. Rightly or wrongly, you stuck to the letter of the law. Heaven knows what I would have done had I loved some other man. Probably I should have been up and off like a bird with him. But I am not accusing you of being unfair because this thing has happened, Paul. That would be very mean. It was a case of you and I together love. And now we are parents, and for the child's sake we must remain husband and wife. So don't begin to cast your eyes on something new and beautiful just as I shut mine to every exit! A baby has a perfect right to a legal father and mother, and every bit of me—every bit of me—ratifies that contract."

"Good business," said Paul, marvelling that she could be so articulate where he felt so dumbly.

Prudence gave a little swaggering movement. "Mrs. Croft is not likely to endow the Croft family with a child. I should say she is forty if she is a day. Thank the gods we are young."

"It is a pity I'm not a major," Graham remarked. "Of course it is better for you to be young." And with these words his teeth began to chatter and ague declared itself by unmistakable signs.



"Oh, fever *again!*" cried Prudence, and to Graham's dismay she showed agitation. That he should be ill now when she needed him appeared to shatter her peace of mind, and Paul in the grip of malaria found her nerves a new and unhelpful experience during the week he lay ill.

The attack proved a severe one, and Murphy broached the subject of leave home to Prudence. Through pinched lips she said wearily, "We could not pay for the passages. Every penny we can save this coming hot weather will be required for my confinement."

The doctor nodded gravely, "That is where the East hits so hard. Graham ought to have twelve months at home and get malaria out of his blood. It is rotten for him to be knocked over again and again. I can dope him with quinine, but he needs to get away from India for a bit. However, don't you worry, Mrs. Graham."

"Not I," she replied gallantly. "I don't want a peevish infant."

"That's right," Murphy encouraged her. "So much depends on you."

Prudence had her task now, and in fulfilling the purpose of marriage lost her old corroding sense of futility. Her one remedy for the poverty imposed upon her by the financial limitations of her husband's military service had been desertion, or a cancellation of their legal contract. In her present case she no longer sought for escape. Suicidal action alone could save her from this third life. Nor was she now enfeebled by an absence of the spirit proper to her circumstances, for she had no misgivings lest she should not love her child. Adoration would inspire her when she held the infant in her arms. She set herself to endow the new life with health, beauty,

imagination, and to compass this her powerful day-dreams created a sphere in which peace of mind reigned supreme. Prudence levied tribute from the sunshine and went star-gazing at night so that the influence of the sky should benefit her baby. She concentrated her sense of touch and sight and smell on the delicacy, colour, and fragrance of the flowers in her garden. Though she still revelled in the weekly illustrated papers, she read the book of Job with curiosity, drawing from it a sustaining assurance of the existence of supernatural forces. Her little face as she read the ancient record was Eve-like in its brooding dreams, its deep desires.

Born in the twentieth century and, in Peshawar, observant of two worlds, the concentrated essence of European tradition and modern discipline in the military and civilian services, through which the emancipated women with their age-long loving and their flying fashions permeated like prismatic colours through cut crystal; and the Mahomedan world, stirred by very different codes and controlled by a harsher creed, in which the veiled womanhood showed like the milky shadow in a moonstone—Prudence was conscious of the tremendous amount of life she witnessed. She could draw down countless impressions into her being to be absorbed to an unknown degree by her offspring.

Though the fascination of existence had never before been so clear to her there was one aspect of her personal experience that specially awed her; the potent charm of physical relationship of which Graham held the spell for her. However she adventured in nature's drama, nothing could be so powerful as that "rightness" of rapture and this "completeness" of fruition. Prudence thought of her cold schemes for departure as a childless woman as having

demonstrated a dangerous ignorance of life. She would have been as one who left seething waters without bathing, swimming, or diving; her intimacy with the great element restricted to mere observation of its restlessness.

Prudence changed the form of her ambitions. No longer was she intent upon pursuing a career to acquire wealth. In a fantastic fairyland which had its quite practical foundations, she set herself the task of enriching the mental and physical endowment of her child: it was her unique opportunity. But her mind strenuously craved success for Paul. Promotion and fame were his affair, and all that was worldly in her demanded them. She built castles in the air in which Paul became a distinguished officer. In another far-off war, as a renowned general who achieved victory, he received a large sum in cash from his gratified country. "I don't see why not. There will always be war. People will forget the last one and have another shot," said this ruthless mother to herself: as ready to profit by violence as any revolutionary.

Prudence sat in her bland verandah, shaded from the blazing sunshine, her fingers busy with the little garments that invited silent and appreciative attention from her eastern household. Her grave face wore a look of peaceful meditation. She had just visualised the moment when Lieutenant-General Sir Paul Graham and his wife motored to Eton on the 4th of June and were greeted by their handsome little son, when she was recalled to facts by the approach of Captain Graham. She saw at once that he carried trouble.

"Do you feel fever coming on?" she demanded apprehensively.

"No, I'm all right," he replied. He took off his

helmet, and the red mark it left on his forehead was not more definite than the air of misfortune conveyed by his silence, his quiet, and the queer expression in his eyes.

"What is wrong?" cried Prudence. "Tell me quick and don't break the news. If you attempt to keep anything from me you will only make me ill with suspense and worry."

"It is nothing frightful," Paul began desperately. "Don't get excited. I daresay it will turn out to be all for the best in the long run. Anyhow I shall have some cash in hand now, so you need not be alarmed. I am axed." And as though the words were unbearable to utter, he turned from her and dived into the bungalow.

Prudence sprang up and stood with her two hands pressed over her ears. This blow had fallen just when she required a peaceful routine, financial stability, settled plans. *Plunge*, she saw them *plunge*, out of their difficult but safeguarded sphere, deprived of their small but certain income, cut off from the companionship they knew, and submerged among those who struggled for employment. This was ruin and disaster. With her nerves clamouring she pursued Paul, and when she entered his dressing-room her young face was panic-stricken.

On the whitewashed walls were strips of red cloth upon which were arranged, on nails, his belts, his spurs, his sword. The dressing-table showed an orderly array of shabby brushes. Rows of boots filled unpainted shelves. And in the middle of this room stood the man himself slowly fumbling with his buckles. If he had been surrendering his sword, forfeiting his rank, deprived of his commission, there could hardly be a more lonely sense of doom conveyed to eyes that watched him. Had he been

wounded his youth would not have bled so plainly as it did now: hope and confidence gone from his white face. He looked round at his wife as though she might mock him, and asked defiantly, "What do you want? Can't you see I don't wish to talk?"

Prudence was terribly impressed by his desolation, and she whispered, "I am upset, Paul. Tell me more. Why have they axed you?"

"Surplus to requirements," he jerked out. Yes, he was typical of thousands of men; young, active, eager—and unemployed. If, when the war ended—a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice—there had been achieved a security from other wars and a prosperity which guaranteed labour a place in the paths of peace, these young married people would not have stood there aghast. Regiments, at one moment, proudly conscious of their embodiment of an essential spirit, proficiency, and tradition, had been during the next condemned to demobilise, dissolve, dwindle into individual lives which struggled to obtain daily bread; the fate of such regiments showed very clearly to the Grahams where they stood now.

"It is not fair!" cried Prudence. "After all the money spent on your education to fit you to be an officer they turn you out of the Army, and tell you to start afresh! They have squeezed the very best out of your youth during the war. They cheat you out of your profession, and big pay as a general, and your pension."

"They pay something down in compensation," Graham said dully. "And I might never have become a general."

"Money!" cried Prudence, suddenly amazingly scornful of mere lucre. "Money can't pay you for all you lose. A man like you who *loves* his regiment!"

"They can't think of sentiment. They are obliged to economise and cut down," Paul said in the same flat voice.

"But why *you*?" she demanded.

He explained the regulations briefly and added, "The Colonel has been quite decent about it."

"Can't the General do something?" Prudence suggested. "I am sure he would if you asked him."

"I have seen him. Nothing can be done," Paul told her.

"But did you show how much you *cared*? Did you tell him I was going to have a baby?" she exclaimed.

"What has our nursery got to do with the Army?" Paul asked with a sudden passion. "You women don't understand. *Care!* Lord, if that counted. . . . Do you suppose the colonels of Irish regiments did not *cry* when they handed over the colours at Windsor Castle? We care fifty thousand times more than you can understand. But the country won't pay a big army at present, I tell you, and hundreds of us have got to go."

"Has your malaria affected the case?" Prudence questioned.

"It did not help me, of course," he told her, patient again.

And at the sight of his resumed stolidity his wife grew frantic once more. "You will sit down under it? Oh, I'm certain there is something you could do. Picture us without a penny and no work. Or you may get a job in some awful business with no prospects on three-pound-ten a week, and consider yourself lucky. Haven't I read the advertisements by the hundred? 'Ex-officer, married, aged thirty, public school boy, regular army, seeks a position of trust. Energetic, full of initiative, able to handle

men.' I don't suppose a thing like that gets even one reply. How are we to live?"

"Don't fuss," he said, alarmed by her wild eyes. "It is bad for you now, you know. There is money in hand, and sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

She stood tragically before him. "If I had not been mad enough to become a mother I could have gone on the stage and become independent directly we got home. I have been right all along in declaring that marriage was insane for you and me! But telling you that was just like hitting a nail on the head. Your mind and your will always resisted my ideas!" Her excitement suddenly left her. She saw nothing more now with her mind's eye. What she beheld was real, actual; Paul surplus to requirements in an administration, and vital to her needs and the needs of their child. Paul, looking strangely out of conceit with himself; depressed, cast down and forlorn. Swiftly she put her arm round his neck and stooped towards him, a caressing creature. "Never mind. We have made our bed and we must lie on it," she said sweetly.

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For many deaths have place in men  
Before they come to die ;  
Joys must be used and spent, and then  
Abandoned and passed by.

GORDON BOTTOMLEY.

SOME contracts are man's fate ; his contract, for instance, with his country ; some are made by himself, such as his marriage. And all include the views of the other party to the bargain. Of the bargaining at the Treaty of Versailles, of the bargaining in the Indian Reforms, of the bargaining over reductions in the Army, the average young officer in Peshawar was very critical. Paul, though as keen a critic as they, was like them forced to accept the accomplished fact, and was now the victim of it. He faced the ordeal of being removed, flipped out as the Joker from a pack of cards, with an air of cool blood which was not sincere. He was met everywhere by words that were well meant but not candid. Senior officers who knew the Army List by heart in all facts which could affect their own prospects, told young Graham that he was well out of it, and that they would chuck their commissions to-morrow if they were his age. Whenever Graham heard names of axed officers and recognised them as belonging to men who had never proved acceptable to the Army, he winced and felt that he would rank henceforth as a man who was weeded out. From every quarter came the annoying question, "What do you mean to do now ?" Vague



suggestions and warnings poured in upon him from those who had heard by letter from a cousin that it was hopeless to try your luck in East Africa at present, or that South America was going to boom before long.

Paul booked passages by second saloon P. & O. at once. The sooner Prudence made the long journey the better. In London he would look round. In Peshawar he could not get into touch with anything. The Khyber Pass, Malakand, Kohat, Cherat—had nothing to offer but an immediate period of heat such as a furnace inflicts, and fever, and mosquitoes, and raids, to be followed by an autumn when reliefs would occur and units change place with other units, and the clubs show new faces, and hold a sprinkling of women again, and extend a welcome to men back from leave spent in England or the hills. Then winter would bring manoeuvres, staff rides, various courses of instruction, and many tournaments. And the civil officials would move on transfer, go into camp, return and give dinner parties, administer the area outside cantonments which was India proper—though this iron North-West was not the India of the tropics, nor of Indian princes, nor of national assemblies and congresses and councils. In such surroundings what prospect was there of gleaning any information as to the marketable value of a young married man who spoke French badly and Pushtu and Urdu rather well, was good at games, popular in his regiment, and efficient as an officer? Of agriculture, accountancy, banking, publishing, advertising, engineering, he was completely ignorant. He had no business experience; his only knowledge was quite useless to practical merchants who did not need to order their industrious clerks to attack a position defended by machine-guns or

snipers, and who would derive no financial profit from those qualities of his which had transformed an uncouth hobble-de-hoy, young Harnam Singh, into a smart soldier. Graham could get his men to go where he wanted them to go, could get them to do what he wanted them to do; and his memory held strange pictures of hills and trenches, and of soldiers marching, digging, shooting, going over the top. Curious how men would follow, and obey, and make the best of things. In such weather too, heat and streaming rain, heat and a crisp dry air that fried your very skin; cold that was still as the stars, cold that moved to the cutting blade of a wind. Days that exposed every movement to the enemy. Nights without sleep. A world of thick mud. Graham could 'take that on again,' and shrank from the prospect of dwindling muscle and youth and daring on an office stool. What did he know of buying and selling? He had never purchased more than a dozen collars at a time. He was selling all his military kit now at an inevitable loss. And to sweat his heart out at a fixed wage to make some other fellow's fortune did not attract him in the least. The biggest business in which he might be a worker was small indeed compared with this great job of guarding and guiding India. Of course he saw that trade was the social activity which produced prosperity; commerce and industry had made modern India what she was, and you had to govern the land in order to maintain a standard of peace, justice, and honesty, and Paul supposed you had to educate the people so as to open their minds, and were obliged to develop the land by rail and road and irrigation, and must have as small an army as possible to ensure the security of all; internal and external security in this country of diverse peoples and tongues and creeds. Paul was

not crying down trade or profession or class other than his own ; he was not ' swanking ' about military glory, or shouting about British prestige, or jingoing for more bloodshed : not he. But he loved soldiering, loved the Army, loved his big brown men ; thought England was a great inspiration and reinforcement and arbitrator in India, and that the white men leading her councils, leading her soldiers, leading her provincial governments, were the right men in the right place, and he regretted there were not more of them and that they were not better backed up. He knew many young men who disliked military service and military officers, and held theories about complete emancipation for India, and the peace of the world. He had not the slightest objection to their criticism, but would have resisted their political interference in military matters with pleasure. If public opinion, demanding military economy, had stopped shouting about bankruptcy before it compelled the official axe to cut short his career, Graham would have been quietly thankful. And his Jats and Punjabi Mahomedans would not be questioning him now with wistful faces as to why he was leaving them. His mind held an unwritten record of their services, his character and theirs had a mutual knowledge which cleared up difficulties ; but he must clear out. Their puzzled regret made him feel like a deserter. It was easier to part from his brother officers, because they were such independent devils, and he would see them again some day at home. But the parting between himself and India and the manner of it was a shrewd pain. Exit Paul Graham, superfluous.

Prudence inspected their meagre personal luggage to make sure that all articles were sufficiently labelled. The trunks were on the verandah and dust sifted

over them quickly. The bungalow was empty of everything save hired furniture which would be called for to-morrow. All their glass, china, and cooking pots had been sold at absurd prices. They were leaving with no personal possessions save their clothes, and Prudence was well aware of how poor an appearance her wardrobe would make in London. Paul's charger had been purchased by Colonel Best for quite a substantial sum, and Prudence had sold her tennis racket to May Molesworth. Mrs. Croft had bought her drawing-room curtains because, forsooth, they would do for Mr. Croft's spare bedroom: a much-resented insult. Paul had given the dogs to Major Murphy, who understood and loved dogs.

Prudence had held her head very high indeed during the last three weeks. She quite amazed Mrs. Best by the way she affirmed that she was thankful to wipe the dust of the East off her shoes. "I am going to have a baby, and I should not care to bring it up out here," she loftily declared. "And I think Paul is certain to fall on his feet. He has thousands of friends, and with influence you can do anything, you know. Though he is such a smart officer I think he has been rather wasted in the Army, between you and me. In something else he will have more scope."

"Yes, but in *what* else, these hard times?" Mrs. Best was goaded into asking.

"Ah, wait and see!" exulted Prudence in a very knowing way. Mrs. Best did not see her cry herself to sleep.

For Ronald Warwick Prudence lay in wait with a notebook and pencil, and rather hard-pressed lips. When he turned up in his car to bid her good-bye she slipped her hand through his arm and walked him

up and down the lawn. "I can only stay a moment," he said, looking at his watch.

"Oh, your moments aren't so precious as all that," Prudence said leisurely. "You are a mere soldier. Wait until Paul tears about in a priceless Rolls Royce and says that his time is money."

"What is he going to do?" Ronald asked.

"That is just what I wanted to talk to you about," her soft voice said. "You and I have been great friends, Ronny, haven't we?"

"Rather," he cried. "We must meet again in Town. I've got my leave all right. After I have lost all my money at Monte Carlo I shall come and cadge a meal from you. Some time in May, I expect."

"And this is February the seventeenth," said Prudence wistfully. "Time is such a *vague* thing, isn't it? By May anything may have happened. However—what address will find you?" She took out her notebook.

"Oh, my club." Prudence wrote down the club he named, and told him Graham's agents.

"Right. I'll remember," Warwick said cheerily.

Prudence wondered if he would. She had never given him what he wanted, never. And in England he knew women who could as easily rival her in beauty as they could outdistance her socially. But if their friendship really *meant* anything to Warwick it would survive the force of circumstances which threatened it. "I shall need your help as a friend in London, Ronny," she told him. "I want Paul to get a really good job, and we don't know many business people. In fact, we don't know one."

"I'll do what I can," he said in his plausible way.

"And you must do a little supper with me somewhere."

Though this was very unsatisfactory Prudence was loth to part from him so coldly. "Ronny, you are

very fond of me, aren't you? Do you simply hate this parting?" she said as she gave him her hand.

She looked lovely, he thought. But not for love or money could he make her his. Knowing this, he was peevish about it, "You could have made me hate it *more*," he told her somewhat bluntly.

Prudence laughed a trifle tremulously. "Don't be absurd! You knew all along I was just 'friends.' Well—*au revoir*!"

When it came to the point he did actually hate the parting. It was hard to take his eyes off her face, hard to pass out of earshot, hard to admit that he knew no woman in all the world who could force herself into his thoughts during absence as this one did. "Peshawar will be an unbearable hole without you. We simply must meet again," he said as he tore himself away, and she waved her farewell to him, reassured.

The Trenches came just before dinner to say good-bye. Shadows were lengthening on the lawn, and the sky was very still, not a cloud stirred, and the trees and flowers were quite motionless. "I shall never have a garden like this again in February," thought Prudence, as she turned to greet the pair who travelled about the world with big letters of credit, to assured positions, and were notable people, well off, and not young and frightened.

"Alas," said Thomas Trench in tones of sincere regret. "Here endeth the first chapter. In the second Graham makes his fortune. But he takes you away, so his gain is our loss."

And Eleanor looked very kind and compassionate as she said, "Tom has put in for short leave, as his father is ill, so we may rush home and back this summer. What address will find you?"

Again Prudence gave the name of Graham's agents.

"We shall go to a railway hotel for a night or two, and then take rooms while Paul looks for a job," the girl said soberly. Neither beauty, nor marriage, nor motherhood had ensured her a roof over her head. Was there ever such a thing of chance and drift and fate as Prudence Graham? she asked herself. "And yet I am bound by contracts as explicitly as those boxes are consigned to their destination by their labels," she thought.

"What was the name of that hotel where Rose and Toby stayed, Tom? You know, somewhere in South Kensington. She said it was quite comfortable and so cheap; only five guineas a week each for everything," Eleanor murmured, but neither of them remembered the name, and Prudence tried to look as though the thought of a hundred pounds spent in ten weeks did not alarm her. Would their lump sum, their only money, slip through their fingers so swiftly?

Prudence stood between the Trenches, with every blade of grass, bough, and leaf in the garden as lifeless as cardboard scenery on a stage. She closed her eyes and said in tones unconsciously dramatic, "I can picture myself in London, catching a bus and eyeing shop windows. But Paul, there, will be a man without a saddle, and without a sword. It won't be Paul—that's all."

"Don't you believe it," said the General, and her sad dark eyes opened to him like windows that let in the night. "Ninety per cent. of his contemporaries have been through the war and never want to think of it, or the Army, again. Once he has made the break and got a job he will be as jolly as a sandboy."

Prudence looked away to the frontier hills. "It has been an interesting experience, seeing Indians and the British together after the war," she said dreamily. "I shall accept nothing now that is

merely West-End. I mean to remember the eastern point of view and the oriental way of doing things, with bare feet and for so small a wage. The raider, the veiled woman, the Brahmin, the fakir—I shall think of those human conditions when I sit in the Tube and everyone looks made to a pattern.”

Eleanor laughed. “Unless you can tell people at home about maharajahs, tiger-shooting, pig-sticking, sedition, and the viceroy, never mention India. In fact, you had better not confess that you have been out here.”

Suddenly the top of the pepper-tree began to sway and the light dust moved in the drive.

“Storm coming,” said the General. “We must go, Eleanor.”

And they went, after a farewell that had the stress of emotion in it. Though Eleanor was thankful to have Prudence removed to a distance, her heart felt a pang as she saw the young mother engulfed by ugly poverty.

Prudence sat on the top of a trunk in the verandah and watched the dust eddy and swirl, and torn papers blow out of the empty house like exorcised ghosts from a tomb. The darkness increased noisily as though the earth was swinging madly into a shouting dark tunnel. The garden vanished in an uproar of crazy tossing leaves and leaping petals, twigs, and branches. Doors burst open desperately and banged with a crash. The disorder of the dust-storm had in it an element of carousal. You could keep your feet against the boisterous wind, but could scarcely keep your head free from nervous panic. Prudence at last buried hers in her hands, and wondered why Paul had deserted her during these last hours in Peshawar. He had been very matter-of-fact, she thought, over her declared allegiance to him. On the



other hand, he had been decidedly romantic in his suffering under the axe. "It is a topsy-turvy world," she muttered. "You never know where you are."

The creaking of heavy wooden wheels moaned through the riot of the storm, and a little steady golden light approached the verandah, moving close to the ground. As the wheels drew near Prudence saw a bullock-cart emerge. The yoked beasts with their pale skins seemed a mild but strong embodiment of all that was most fitted to endure the strain of the fantastic darkness animated by so satanic a storm. The Indian who urged them forward with a dull routine of labour consisting in whacks and shouts uncurled himself from the rough shaft of the wagon, salaamed to the white woman by the door, and became immediately as silent and apathetic as his beasts. Prudence could not have explained why she waited there, where the dim light twinkled and the cattle lowered their stupid heads, and the driver's limbs were as dark as the storm's violent blackness; why she did not seek refuge in the empty house where she had made plans that came to nothing, and friends who departed. Perhaps it was because, under the influence of the rushing night and her loneliness and dread, the girl had turned her back on the past and, facing her precarious future, was at last praying; praying hard. The wind was like a great wing that passed and repassed over her little bowed head.

In the tranquillity which succeeded the dust-storm Paul came back from the lines where he had bade farewell to the subadar-major and the other Indian officers and the men. The subadar-major had said to him, "Sahib, when my father left this regiment he said to me, 'This is a death.' He lived many years afterwards, but always he said that he had

died once. That is true talk, sahib." The Indian soldiers made no secret of their sorrow. Never again in Graham's life would men display so much simple grief at losing sight of him, at losing touch with him. He came back to No. 184 The Mall, which a Major Stevens and his family would inhabit by next Sunday—and alas, the said major was no gardener—conscious that there were roots in sentiment that no axe could reach.

The bullock-cart was filled with their luggage and rumbled off to the station. The bearer, with every sign of bereavement, laid out a picnic dinner for them. Prudence had refused all offers of hospitality, prompted by a curious sense of silent withdrawal. She was glad she had done so when she observed Paul's face: its expression looked as though it had been cut and dried in his heart's hell.

The Grahams kept up quite a cheerful patter of conversation while they ate. Prudence grew restless to be up and off, and was glad when at last Paul called to her, "Are you ready?"

The General's motor was waiting for them at the door, sent with a note from him that said, "Dear little friend, keep up your spirits, and God bless you." She tore the note in half and the fragments, caught by a draught, stole languidly into the bungalow and lay there. "That's nice. I'd rather have a blessing than a curse any day," cried Prudence, her imagination swiftly stirred.

Paul was about to enter the motor when there came a dark scurry up the drive, a patter of soft paws, a nose all eager damp caress, eyes that blazed with love, and a panting, triumphant heart. The cocker spaniel was sprawling all over Paul, licking him in an agony of relief and joy. Her little black tail whisked the whole world to and fro in one intense wriggle,

and if ever a small creature knew what it wanted, and exulted in the presence of a loved being, that warm black thing did, exquisitely satisfied and content to have found Paul again.

For a moment Paul said nothing ; just petted her. Then Prudence heard his husky voice say, " Oh, my dear, my dear, I can't take you, you know." She felt a lump come in her throat. He gathered up his dog in his arms and got into the motor, and told the Sikh chauffeur to drive to Murphy Sahib's bungalow. All the way he was talking into the silky ear, while the cocker spaniel sat on his knees and sniffed the air and was very proud and confident. In front of Major Murphy's verandah the Sikh sounded the hooter hideously to summon a servant, but Murphy himself came out and advanced, saying, " She gave the sweeper the slip. I'm awfully sorry. Come, little lady." His hand reached her collar and Paul, quite dumb, bundled her out of the motor into Murphy's arms, where she struggled and strained.

" Good-bye, good luck, Mrs. Graham," called the doctor, and " *Get on,*" said Paul urgently to the chauffeur.

That was all, but something in the loss of that happy little loving dog made Graham look intolerably lonely as he left his regiment, and the Army, and the life he prized.

As the Eurasian guard whistled for the train to leave Peshawar for the far-distant sea, and the friends who had come to the station to see them off stepped back with motioning hands, Paul turned to Prudence and, indicating their luggage, asked, " Is that all ? "

" Yes," said Prudence, and the mail started with a jolt. " That, and what there is in the van, is all you have got, except me."

His face lit up for a moment with a boyish smile.

"Humph. You're a pretty baggage for a man to look after, aren't you?" he remarked cheerfully. He tried to whistle, but that was a complete failure.

Sitting down suddenly, he said very doggedly, "Well, I've paid every damned penny we owed, anyhow."

Such a she who'll match with me ?  
In flying or pursuing,  
Subtle wiles are in her smiles  
To set the world a-wooing.  
She is steadfast as a star,  
And yet the maddest maiden :  
She can wage a gallant war  
And give the peace of Eden.

G. MEREDITH.

" I HATE all foreigners," Graham announced, immune from the suave neutrality of diplomacy. " The Colonies are the place for us."

He made this declaration in a third-floor sitting-room in a dingy street near Earl's Court underground station. His elbows were gauntly set on a green serge cloth which covered a large table in the centre of the room. Stiff white lace curtains fell across a big bay-window and rep curtains of a deep red flanked them on either side. The fire-place was filled with shavings of pink paper, and the fender armed with many implements made a complete arsenal. Two arm-chairs with broken springs faced each other with a desperate air of shabby gentility. The soiled white-and-gold wallpaper was covered by large engravings representing Queen Victoria in the Highlands, an immense Newfoundland dog, and three religious subjects. Yellow double doors with excessive and complicated graining and large white china handles, opened into the Grahams' bedroom. A smell of cooking came up the stairs.

"I won't go to a Colony. Nothing will induce me to budge from England," retorted Prudence from the bay-window where she idly fidgeted with the cord of a torn blind.

"But why not?" asked Graham in expostulation. "What have you got against the Colonies?"

"I don't like Colonials," said Prudence.

"You don't know any," Graham argued quite gravely, and as though she had offered a perfectly reasonable contribution to the problem under discussion.

"I should dislike them if I did," she maintained.

"Which?" Graham persevered.

"All of them in different ways," Prudence declared.

Having considered this, Graham said, as he slowly filled his pipe, "I call that absurd, you know. The Colonies are part of the show. More so than India."

She turned to him from the window and said emphatically, "I am not going to spend the rest of my days surrounded by miles and miles of wheat, or thousands of drivelling sheep, or unlimited orchards, or acres of flax, tea, coffee, and rubber. All that stuff outside the house; and inside, I can picture myself washing up and cooking if it is not a tropical place—and nursing you with fever if it is! And never growing rich. Bah! No, thank you."

Prudence swayed by the window as though all save her motionless feet raced towards a goal. "Make your fortune here in London," she cried energetically. "Here, where there are millions of men and women, and millions of pounds. This is the fortress to storm. You are at the very gate, and yet you want to do

another ghastly voyage away from the centre of things towards a god-forsaken horizon where we shan't see a living soul. I call you mad in some ways, Paul."

The room represented the art, the sentiment, the furniture, the middle-class fashion, of a dead and gone generation no more plainly than these young married people represented their own immediate and urgent sentiments. Clearly the discussion, so far, had revealed nothing but mere likes and dislikes.

"Everybody is mad, more or less," retorted Graham. "I should have thought any sane person would have preferred growing things in a climate where you see the sun occasionally to vegetating here. This room makes me sick."

"It would kill me to live always in our present surroundings—simply kill me," Prudence threatened him. "But this is only the starting point. I saw the cliffs of Dover as the chalk line from which we began the race. I won't let you turn back! Oranges and apples and wheat indeed! . . . I mean to purchase fruit at Harrod's stores, and bread and cake at the most expensive shops in London before I'm old. And in those outlandish places to which you want us to crawl men will be still toiling and moiling to supply London with food."

"You are always *imagining* a fortune," Graham expostulated. "Bread and butter are not paid for by imagination. I have got to find work."

"Yes," said Prudence, a little subdued. It always frightened her to have her flights of fancy curbed. "I don't suppose we can live on air. But I want you to find work in England."

"Let us be practical," urged Graham, much

relieved to hear her speak of work instead of wealth.

"Well, make a practical suggestion," Prudence said, and sat down on one of the uncomfortable arm-chairs. She had an air of not belonging to the room, ignoring it. It might have been a waiting-room at a station and she about to catch the next express.

"It practically comes to this—I *must* go to the Colonies," said Graham, and instantly talked sentiment. Not emotionally, but prompted by his personal feeling. "I suppose you could call me very British. That's partly public school training, partly military training, and a good bit of it is the war. I want to stick among my own sort. I was keen on our show in India, but I should dislike to spend my time among Dagos anywhere. I hate politics and all that. It makes all the difference in the world to me if I am among the kind of men I like, and if I have a bit of land in which I can take a personal interest." He looked at her pathetically. "That does not appeal to you? You want society and shops. Naturally. So, *if* I can get a job in London in the next two months, we'll stay here and hope it will turn up trumps. If it does you won't hear me hanker after Canada, or South Africa, or Australia. I am a Londoner, though I prefer the country in England to London any day. But if by the first of June I am still without work I *must* try my luck overseas." His blue eyes looked as though seas had washed them clear of dust.

"Once upon a time I thought of deserting you. I suggested it, do you remember?" Prudence said, in an odd tone. "Do you mean to turn the tables?"

"You won't be fit to travel and rough it in June,"



young Graham explained gently. "I should take just enough cash to start me, and leave all the rest with you. Later you and the baby could join me."

"No," Prudence exclaimed. "No. Let us be sensible." She promptly went on to speak with passion. "You are always thinking about patriotism; it seems to me there are two sides to that. India is part of the Empire, and we were told we weren't needed there. Here, in England, you declare that men like you are not wanted. I should think if this sort of thing is catching that any of the Colonies might deport us as undesirables! And yet *you* defended the Commonwealth, or whatever they are pleased to call it. It is all too sickening. I never saw such a muddle. Law and order indeed—it is just a chaos of desire and prejudice. We could not have had free love—if we had wanted it—without rousing the moral indignation of Church and State. We married, and then the law had us on toast. There was nature to reckon with; and now I am a mother and the law holds me responsible for our child's unborn life, and holds you responsible for my debts. If we were just savages we'd live or die rather horribly, but it would not be so complicated as this. What is the good of our education? It only increases our fears. If you joined unskilled labour—and we lived as labouring folk do—would you be sure of a job? Not you. I can't see any way out for us. We are primitive in a profound sense, but sophisticated to an intense degree: and it makes existence tragic."

Graham looked at her with his wary earnestness. How strange a being she was; her flow of speech, her ardour, her sensitiveness, all moved him, stirred him to action, made him ache to put things right for

her. It seemed to him very cruel that she was involved in his financial disaster, and the mother of his child, without the saving grace of loving him. He fidgeted idly with his patience cards while he contrasted the business-like procedure of taking counsel with his own sex—whether the matter under consideration was cricket, mess accounts, or war—and holding a consultation with his wife on how best to utilise their resources, where the child should be born, what work he should seek, and in which land they should live. For her needs and desires swayed him more intimately than the compelling decisions of his fellow-men. This feminine creature, who could not feel the fascination of an orchard, but delighted to pay cash over a counter for delicate fruit, ate always with complete indifference. She had loved to dance, yet she now carried a physical burden with a calm slow strength that seemingly imposed on her no regret for freer movement. She had wounded him with her schemes to ensure her the applause of a public and money to burn, but she lived solitary in these dull lodgings and never spent an unnecessary penny of his limited capital. He knew her mind quivered with a fierce passion towards luxury, power, personal emancipation from common restrictions; but her history showed nothing of the wanton. There was no coarseness in her. She had moved back restlessly to the window and was looking out. Hour after hour she did that. It cost no money, and, though her delicate profile was wistful, her gaze never lost its imaginative energy as it followed each passer-by to the corner where they vanished.

A slatternly young woman, whose smudged face wore an expression of unintelligent impertinence, brought in a letter. The Grahams stirred. Paul

answered advertisements untiringly, and also advertised in two newspapers with anxious expenditure. He threw the letter away from him across the table in disappointment and Prudence picked it up. "Oh, this is from Ronny!" she cried, and tore it open.

Graham displayed a somewhat elaborate indifference which did not diminish when his wife announced: "He arrived in England last week and is with his people. He is coming up to London and sends you his salaams, and wants you to lunch with him at his club one day. But he hopes I'll have a long talk with him first and asks me to dine with him *tête-à-tête* on Thursday. I shall of course."

"Right-oh," Graham agreed philosophically. "Does he give you any Peshawar news?"

"No." Prudence hovered by the table. "Paul, aren't you keen? Ronny knows heaps of people. He may be able to get you a job."

"I'll be keen on getting the job," Paul growled.

"You don't like him?" Prudence suggested discontentedly.

"I do not," her husband acknowledged, and began to slap out the cards on the dingy table-cloth briskly.

Prudence made a restless gesture. "Did you like the barrister—Mr. Montgomery?" she asked.

"Oh, that fellow? I don't know him," Graham replied in an absent-minded voice.

"What do you think happened that day after you flung out of the room and left me alone with him?" she was impulsively moved to enquire.

"I should think he gave you a piece of his mind, for what it was worth. He liked the sound of his own voice," said Graham.

"He suddenly caught me in his arms and kissed me wildly for ages," Prudence announced.

Graham did not raise his eyes from the cards, but the back of his neck above his collar grew red. "It served you right, my dear girl," was all he vouchsafed.

"I call that a horrid thing to say!" exclaimed his wife.

"Sorry," said Graham simply. "But that is my opinion."

"Do you mean to tell me that if a woman asked your advice about her private affairs you'd feel justified in kissing her whether she liked it or not?" Prudence demanded with indignation.

"That is your way of putting it," objected Graham. "You showed him that matrimony with me as your husband dissatisfied you. I don't say he tried to help you out of the hole, but he offered you his sympathy and what he thought was a pleasant change."

Prudence regarded her husband severely. "You are very odd, Paul, I must say. Apparently you don't object to men kissing your wife."

He lifted a very angry face, but in his eyes there was a gleam of humour, "Oh, don't I? Blaming them is another thing altogether."

"You mean you blame the woman?" she demanded.

"Nine times out of ten," Graham said stubbornly.

"I *never* met anyone so old-fashioned!" murmured Prudence.

The conversation drifted into silence. An inconclusive silence, during which Paul played patience and Prudence resumed her watch by the window. Those two debated and argued with their emotional

energy, their passionately held points of view. Differences of opinion could not separate their lives at present, nor could a single dispute end the controversy of their temperaments. In such moments they angered or attracted each other without alienating or converting. And since they did not dissemble, they gained a sense of freedom and fair-play by their individual assertion and expression of character, which tended to make their intimacy an expanding sphere of action; unique in their personal experience, and a sanctuary from mere formula.

Prudence counted much upon her evening with Ronald Warwick. Her fate had always been largely determined by the effect of her personal touch upon others. Her mere presence had compelled Paul Graham's love. People who had seen her, met her casually, encountered her haphazard, became subject to her sway. No other test had been applied than the test of their admiration, their delight in her. "It is just my luck to be like that," she admitted, claiming no merit, but reckoning like a gambler on the incalculable. Behind her dark eyes her sombre insight was at work, discerning the effect her personality might have in intensifying Warwick's concern for their financial dilemma. Superficial interest was so swift to evaporate. "I want him to engineer the thing; take action to find Paul a job." Thinking of such a possibility she felt capable of galvanising a hundred Warwicks into activity. It maddened her vivid realisation of the dramatic potentialities of the coming encounter to be so thwarted by poverty; knowing the effect of surprise, she hated to wear a dress already familiar. To be staged in London as one was staged in Peshawar was to lack all the shrewd appropriateness of a successful *coup d'état*.

It might be worth the reckless expenditure of fifteen guineas for a new frock "to do the thing properly"; but she could not explain that to Paul, and she dreaded to see the look of apprehension leap into his eyes which was so swiftly invoked there by any unforeseen diminution of his capital. It seemed extravagant enough on Thursday evening to drive to the Ritz in a taxi, instead of jumping out of a bus by Devonshire House and crossing Piccadilly on foot. But the actress in her sincerely and artistically revolted against so poor an entrance on to the scene.

If there were artificial aids to her loveliness on her reddened lips there was the reality of tyrannical nature in her sudden and unanticipated quarrel with her husband when she came into the ugly, mean sitting-room before starting.

Paul looked up at her, a little startled by her clash with her surroundings. In his eyes she might well quicken the pulses of Babylon. The maid had already laid a very creased white cloth upon the table, and a dingy cruet and a chipped plate with a yellow cheese awaited his solitary meal. Lost was the fine ritual of dinner in his mess. But this girl's beauty survived all social revolutions. He could not afford to take her to dine at the Ritz; Warwick could. Graham hated to play the dog in the manger, and his domestic responsibilities were too pressing to enable him to give vent to his impulses and say he would be hanged if he'd take any job which came to him through Warwick. Something of these repressions let off steam when he said to his young wife in tones that expressed an indulgent affection, although the words were drastic, "Now behave yourself, mind. Don't play the fool with Warwick to-night, Prue. Remember that ass Montgomery."

Graham was wholly unprepared for the way she turned upon him, crying, "That is disgusting of you! I was free then, and even so I hated it. To let that happen *now* would be outrageous. Oh, you men never understand women!"

It was plain that she felt insulted, but the good faith in which Graham had uttered his warning, and his retrospect of their precarious relationship, withheld an apology. He offered instead an explanation. "Perhaps I understand men better than you can. I was thinking of Warwick more than of you when I said that."

"You have spoilt my whole evening!" she cried.

"I didn't mean to do so. That's just your nerves," he said soothingly.

The servant pushed the door open with her knee and came in carrying a laden tray. "The taxi's 'ere," she announced.

Graham followed Prudence downstairs. She swept forward as though to escape from the dingy house. He overtook her and detained her with his left hand, while his right held the latch of the hall door. He kissed her swiftly averted cheek after a masterful fashion; then he opened the door. She stood for a moment on the whitewashed steps; the taxi was ticking up pennies, the driver looked at her with the quick appraising glance of a Londoner, and newspaper boys hawked the evening news all unconcerned. Opposite the members of a third-rate bridge club came and went. Prudence turned to her husband, ignoring alike their quarrel and his embrace. "I may be very late," she said.

Impatiently she rattled down both windows of the taxi, feeling stifled. It was hard, she thought, to be so handicapped. The father of her child lost

sight of their parenthood, the man she meant to influence was ignorant of it; but Prudence herself held that there was no limit to the obligation implicit in the fact that she was a mother. She was obedient to its discipline when she was mutinous against every other restriction and compulsion. And she was tyrannical in her set determination that there should be no infringement by others of rights that she held sacred. "And anyhow, I don't like being kissed—it's an indignity," she thought.

The high walls of houses in Cromwell Road slipped by like a world without end, she was glad when museums and churches broke the monotony, and then Brompton shops began the subtle process of temptation to spend money. Piccadilly cast a different spell beyond Hyde Park Corner. Prudence glanced resentfully at the substantial clubs on her left. Paul could no longer afford club subscriptions. Her husband, who since the first day at his preparatory school had never been without organised companionship, was surely mad to suggest seeking the solitary places of the earth. He was a most tenacious man; let him hold on in London, and eventually win a position for her here. She tipped the taxi driver liberally when she got out.

Ronald Warwick advanced to meet her over the soft thick carpet, and she greeted him with an intimate air of genuine pleasure. When she slipped out of her wrap in the cloak-room she experienced a momentary pang of dismay, for the other women turning and twisting there in front of shimmering mirrors were jewelled, were better dressed. Well, eventually she might acquire such adornments. But where would they obtain the attributes of her beauty? She stood there for a moment, breathing defiance; then turned away to join Warwick, too vital a being



to be rendered self-conscious by the display of wealth around her.

The scene in the dining-room delighted her at first. It seemed to Prudence that nothing was lacking of luxury and gaiety and liberality. She contrasted the room with the club in Peshawar, she compared the women with those unseductive careworn souls who passed her windows in Earl's Court by the thousand every day. She experienced a sensation of excitement and pleasure, as though she participated in a great achievement. But almost immediately a reaction set in. She questioned—what next? There was something tawdry in ostentation. Suddenly she remembered the serene beauty of camps bathed in moonlight. The restaurant was very fascinating as a change, but Prudence decided that if she were rich she would not do this sort of thing often. Warwick's comments on the obvious began to bore her intolerably. When he called her attention to the fifth fat man he had urged her to observe, and exclaimed once more, "Did you ever see such a bulging neck before?" Prudence retorted, "Yes, often," and, looking critically at Warwick, thought that he lacked personal distinction, although he was irreproachable in every conventional detail of his appearance. Time was flying and she had accomplished nothing. Summoning her energy and her cherished illusion as to their friendship she leant towards him across the table and urged softly, "Never mind all these creatures, Ronny; there are our own little lives to discuss."

His response was eager. "Yes; that is why I asked you to come by yourself. It is so difficult to talk before a third person, and there is something I want to tell you."

"About a job for Paul?" she leapt to it. But

a job for Paul had been far from his mind. That was quite clear. What he was intensely conscious of was the difficulty of telling Prudence that he loved another woman. He blurted it out eventually, and while she sat motionless, intent, hardly touching any food, he elaborated the information. At the Lucknow week he had met Mrs. Winchester and, at once, realised that he was 'in for it.' There was no mistaking the real thing, he assured Prudence. They had come home by the same ship and had lingered in the Riviera where she stayed with friends. They were going to be married immediately.

"Is she a widow?" Prudence asked. She felt as though she had now lost all touch with Warwick.

"No. She divorced Winchester last year. Luckily there were no children to complicate matters. They did not suit each other and she was absolutely miserable. Her father left her a lot of money, so she could do as she pleased; quite independent in that way. There was somebody else in Paris—he was that kind of fellow. So they fixed it up."

"I see," she said slowly. Then she added, "I do hope you will be wildly happy, Ronny."

"I am," he assured her.

She could not resist a sly thrust, "I thought you disapproved of divorce?"

Warwick was offended. "It depends on the circumstances," he said stiffly.

"Well, I expect she is charming," Prudence conceded. "Shall you go out to India again?"

"Oh no. She would hate that existence. I'm leaving the Army and we shall hunt next winter," he explained rather grandly.

Prudence gave a little unexpected laugh, and he raised his eyebrows, still a trifle annoyed. She

saw her distance from Warwick as immeasurable. Her only point of contact with him had been the desire of his eyes. He had no real friendship for her, and that being so she would ask no help from him.

When they parted he did not enquire if he might go and see her, and he sent a vague message to Paul. "Tell him to ring me up at the club."

"I'm afraid he'll be too busy to do that," said Prudence.

She did not guess, as they sat side by side in the taxi, that Warwick, as of old, was uneasily aware of her beauty, her vividness. The insipid, elaborate, artificial divorcee whom he professed to adore drifted from crisis to crisis. Winchester had been bored to desperation by her. When the taxi turned into the depressing common street where the Grahams had rooms and Warwick watched Prudence put the latch-key into the mean hall door he marvelled at the debonair indifference with which she bade him good-night. "Heavens, what a ghastly way to live!" he muttered to himself as he drove from the street.

On the dingy stairs Prudence paused, leaning against the wall; defeated, piteously disappointed. Then she pulled herself together and went into their room. Graham was sitting up for her. There was something very enduring, very reliable, about this man, Prudence thought.

"Such a sell for me," she confessed frankly. "Ronny no longer takes the slightest interest in me. He is engaged to a woman who does not sound very delightful—but she may be all right. Anyhow, he is pleased with himself and in love with her."

"Well, that's the main thing," said Graham, infinitely relieved.

"Yes. As you say, that is the main thing," murmured Prudence and sank into a chair with an air of exhaustion.

. . . I, being poor, have only my dreams ;  
I have spread my dreams under your feet :  
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

W. B. YEATS.

PRUDENCE turned from her looking-glass with a shrug of her shoulders. Her beauty had vanished. She moved heavily into the sitting-room and surprised Graham in an attitude of deep dejection, his head buried in his hands. Conscious of her approach, he assumed an interest in the daily paper. But presently he threw it aside and exclaimed to his wife, who stood looking down at the pavements : " What you find attractive while gazing out of that infernal window I can't imagine ! You spend hours at it."

She nodded. " There has never been a man like Cinderella nor like the Lady of Shalott, I suppose. I look on, look out, look forward to something happening, quite naturally."

It was a hot July day. " Come and sit in Kensington Gardens ?" Graham suggested.

" It is too far to walk, and I hate being under scrutiny in a bus now," she objected. But a sudden flame of hatred for the gloomy lodgings made her urge him to go out and leave her.

Graham shook his head. What was the use of wearing out his boots ? He had to consider all that sort of thing now. Tennis, cricket, golf were unattainable, and he had given up smoking. It was odd

not to own any animal : he had neither horse nor dog. Cut off from the men he knew, and prevented by circumstances from making fresh acquaintances, he spent his life searching for work, waiting for work. His only companion was his wife. The thought of her was a continual agony to him. He felt a cold sweat break out when the fear of a prolonged unemployment gripped him. How was he going to see Prudence through ? Yet see her through he must. It was unbearable to be denied the means of supporting his own wife. A man who could not meet that obligation was a wash-out.

"A penny for your thoughts ?" Prudence enquired. When he did not reply, she gave a low laugh and said bitterly, "I know what they are. You are regretting our marriage at last."

"Not I," Graham declared with indignation, and added, "I'm only cursing fate on your account. You were fed up with things in Peshawar : this is fifty thousand times worse. If you had not met me you would have married someone else and he might have been a millionaire. That makes me pretty sick, I can tell you."

Prudence said after deliberation, "I like you more than I did in those Peshawar days. And I like myself less."

Graham's face changed. "Do you mean 'love,' or 'like' ?" he asked promptly.

Her reply came regretfully : "I mean like. I have never felt love. That is giving, not taking. It is losing yourself to find your life. It is the one impersonal thing which inspires your whole personality. I can't imagine why you love me."

"Rather unfortunate for you perhaps," he said in gloomy accents. "I've made big claims on you."

Prudence admitted that frankly. "But you have

always played up well, Paul. I don't think you have ever been unfair. When I look out of the window and see all those countless hundreds of shabby people pass I often ask myself why I expect special luck, why I take it for granted that I should live as a dainty darling? And yet for the life of me I cannot cease to crave for abundance, the fulness of things. Perhaps I shall love our child so greatly that I shall obtain it that way. I am waiting to see. If I can't love—then I must *have*, must possess desirable things."

Graham felt that it was all very fine for a woman to stand up to him defining what love was, and declaring that her free choice lay between love and money, but when you had no money and loved her it was enough to drive you wild. He had never met anyone who could derive so much passionate emotion from unreality as Prudence. Graham did not believe that money was a substantial, actual value to the girl. She visualised it as happiness, a mirage. The real thing was her pursuit of it, which he had prevented. And his pursuit of her love was a thing she calmly ignored, yielding to his passion, gladly bearing his child, and all the time looking away from him at some fantasy of her imagination. Suddenly resentful, he accused her in his own mind of making use of him. Through him she experienced the very essence of life, but she stood by that window as though the apples of desire were stored for her somewhere in the heart of the huckstering city.

The intolerable months since he was axed had aged young Graham. His unemployment filled him with helpless rage. And he now foresaw another contest with his wife on the subject of emigration. His capital grew rapidly less, and with every week's expenditure his prospective value and security in a new country diminished. He hated the idea of leaving

Prudence against her will, but, as with the male of any species, scarcity drove him far afield in order to provide the necessities of life for his mate and offspring. Chivalry would impel him if he could find work in England to take it, however uncongenial, in order that this mother might rest content. He felt, however, that the chance of getting work at home was very remote. Beset by restless depression, he decided to go out in spite of the wear and tear in shoe leather. Prudence heard him brushing his coat after he had passed into the bedroom. She admired, with a pang, his way of defending certain conventional standards ; the energy and care with which he cleaned his own boots. It would not be easy, she thought, to make Paul Graham go to pieces. Afterwards, as she watched him from the window, she felt an assurance of enterprise. It was impossible for this woman to lose her sense of ardent expectation. And, in the stillness of the hired room, she companioned Graham's vanishing form with the force to which she had allied herself instinctively of late. With closed eyes and her little dark head at rest against the window-sash she urgently prayed for good luck, for something to turn up trumps. When her husband returned without any announcement of chance and fortune having suddenly favoured him, she was undismayed. There was always tomorrow to herald great events, new developments.

And, one day, Graham did return with quickened step. To the young welcome news is but a realisation of their anticipations ; they expect the wonderful to happen, they contemplate all that is good becoming true. So when Graham flung his hat up to the smoky ceiling and cried to her, " I've got a job at last ! " Prudence instantly exclaimed, " I knew you would ! " And her triumphant words did not take the wind out of his sails in the least degree.



He told her that it was not much of a job. "But it will tide things over for a bit," Graham said. Obviously he experienced an intense feeling of relief.

"It is better than nothing, anyhow," cried Prudence, before she had even learnt what it was.

Graham told her that as he was walking up Piccadilly he ran into a man he had been with at Sandhurst. They had had a talk, and it transpired that Vincent—that was his name—had a good many irons in the fire; an enterprising fellow. He had certain interests in a sports club at a watering-place in France. It was in Savoy, a jolly spot much frequented by Americans and British. The job he had offered Paul was in connection with this club. He was to run the social side of life in a fashionable hotel in which Vincent had shares, and act as liaison between the club and the crowd at the hotel. Graham would receive his board and lodging at the hotel and have nothing to pay at the club and would also receive a salary. It was not a princely sum, but the whole arrangement would reduce their expenses, and enable them to husband their resources.

"I have to go over to France on Friday and can have a look round and get quiet rooms for you. That is, if you feel equal to the journey. I will telegraph and then you can join me. They don't pay your expenses at the hotel, and unfortunately it costs a fortune to stay there."

Prudence asked, a suspended amusement animating her face, "Have you fixed this up to-day?" He told her that he met Vincent ten days ago, on that hot afternoon when she would not come out with him. He had said nothing to her until the matter had been definitely settled. Prudence shrugged her shoulders at this; men were independent folk. She could not have concluded an arrangement to

earn her living regardless of Graham's approval. Philosophically she accepted that inherent mastery of a situation which men possessed, and expressed herself as delighted by the turn events had taken. "Of course I'll join you, Paul. Hurry up and get rooms. I shall die of laughter when I think of you as a leading spirit in high jinks. It is the funniest thing I ever heard in my life. Only don't ask the women where they are going next hot weather, will you? Oh dear, if only I could help you! But for the present I am otherwise engaged. Of course the point is that you are so good at games. What a mercy! And, Paul, do remember that the people you will associate with are rich, and some man might put you on to a really good thing!"

Paul made a face. "There you go, counting your chickens! I don't suppose those people are my sort at all. But one can't quarrel with one's bread and butter."

Prudence was wistfully anxious when the day came for him to leave her. She appeared almost frightened to remain alone in their lodgings with the cross-grained landlady and the sullenly aggressive servant. Having asked Graham several times as to the day and hour when she could expect to hear from him, she shed tears over the prospect of a week in London without a soul to speak to, and the long journey unaided and solitary. Never had she shown herself so dependent, timid, and dismayed.

Secretly loathing the task awaiting him, Paul assumed a satisfaction with it. "Well, anyway, it's France; I'm on an ally's ground; and many a better man than I had to stop there," he said, stoutly stating his one consolation.

His wife looked at him curiously and exclaimed in wonder, "Oh, you are incurably romantic!" at

which unwelcome criticism he gave an indignant snort.

But it was with no formal precision, rather with a mysterious sense of invocation, that she said, "God bless you," when he left her.

That day she ceased to look out of the window. She sat quiet in the dull room, listening to the ticking of the clock, and seeing in her mind's eye the places she had in turn called "home," the faces of distant friends, and that scene with Paul when she had cried to him, "You are spoiling my chance of happiness," and he had asserted, "I promise that it shall be all right for you in the end." That had not come true as yet, though she was the mother of his child, and so fast bound to him and his.

Some instinct moved her, however, to cling ever to a hope that Paul Graham had a victorious nature. On this point she had grown superstitious. Perhaps some day he would captivate her sense of awe, secrecy, delight, and she would love him. He would never dominate the primitive barbaric woman in her by rough riding and a display of brutal power: he stood on the defence for civilisation, gentleness, courtesy. Graham could not dazzle the sophisticated adventuress in her by a manifestation of luxury. At present he represented affection, companionship, and protection to her. Passion she had experienced, and she possessed its fruit; but love eluded her. Though henceforth she might regulate her conduct by the moral standards of law and duty, she would still lack the divine touch should she fail to love. "If I cannot have that fire then I will strive for the brilliant things. I don't see that it is my fault," concluded Prudence. But her self-justification did not reassure her, and she finally admitted that she had not prepared her nature to love; her preoccupa-

tion had been with privilege and materialism and sensation, not with spiritual innocence.

Her personal insignificance weighed heavily upon Prudence during the days following Paul's departure. Her comings and goings excited no interest in anybody. Admiration was now denied her. Her beauty no longer provoked the attention of a world susceptible to that sorcery. When she took exercise, and returned to her lodgings conscious of a vague need, she received no welcome. "No one is glad to see me," she murmured to herself, deeply dismayed. Yet her anticipation of happiness continued, undeterred by the lack of anything to warrant it.

The second week in July was chilly, and London streets wore a look of diminished vitality in the absence of summer sunshine; but socially the season was gay, and Prudence read of parties and pageants as a defrauded creditor might read of the extravagance of a careless debtor. "I'm not rich, I'm not unscrupulous—and so I suffer the denial of all the excitement and entertainment for which I crave. Domestic virtue does not pay," sighed Prudence. But even as she sighed she realised that there was something of peace in her heart because her motherhood carried no slur from any irretrievable act of hers.

Taking a solitary walk in order to kill time, Prudence contrasted rich and poor as they passed each other in the busy streets. Colour flashed behind the fragile veil of glass in shop windows which succeeded each other in unending line, as though strings of beads lay there for London women to use as a rosary in their devotion to magnificence and adornment. Prudence on foot pressed through Bond Street like a raider rendered impotent to loot by lack of arms. But it was not the merchandise that excited her desire so much as the appeal of possession as exempli-

fied by the appearance and demeanour of the wealthy citizens in contrast to those who were shabby, careworn, and impoverished. Her dark eyes perceived in this sharp opposition of things temporal a flat contradiction to all unworldly urgings in her heart. "I want my child to be heir to abundance," she declared to herself, and then suddenly pictured in her mind's eye Warwick and Paul. Certainly she would prefer a son who inherited the personality of the poorer man. And, though her footsteps carried her through a crowd of which she was ever observant, her mind became preoccupied with the tantalising mystery of the long-familiar words—"heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." What of her child's spiritual inheritance?

She had reached Brompton Road when she began to notice the invincibly zealous heart of youth at play, action in which imagination and accuracy alike had scope, something that diverted the mind from finite values. Past shops displaying old furniture swaggered side by side two small boys; very wonderfully they had obtained possession of those straw cases in which bottles of wine are wrapped. The primitive straw equipment had translated them into another world: their little legs were encased in them, their arms were protected by them, their round faces peered under them in all solemnity; without self-consciousness they had become two wild cave men of Great Britain just opposite Harrods Stores. Therefore they marched, they did not merely walk; they hunted, they did not merely search; they pursued, they did not merely follow. And the smile they called to Prudence's lips lay tenderly upon them long after the happy savages had passed from sight. Their impression was finally obliterated by a whistling creature who came flying into view when

Prudence paused by South Kensington Station, waiting for a break in the stream of traffic which came pouring in from six streets that converged at the thronged corner. The jolly lad was riding a "push-bike" and his two hands scorned to touch the handles of his machine. He waved them in the air, reckless of mischance. And, as though it were not sufficiently enterprising to scorn to let them guide and steer him where guidance and steering required an expert judgment, he balanced on his gleeful young head an arm-chair, poised upside down with its four sedate legs protesting to heaven against the offender who should have been a reliable errand-boy, but was a gambler, an adventurer! "Good luck to him!" called Prudence in her heart of hearts.

Prudence became tired and fought her way into a bus. It was of the old-fashioned type and sixteen people sat opposite each other while five more stood in the middle of the conveyance, and the burly conductor, crying "Fares please, any more fares, please!" pushed from end to end again and again through the jungle of umbrellas and the dark-ambush of human feet. Outside, the driver, his broad back turned upon the inmates of the bus, and hidden from those luckier or more enterprising passengers who rode on the top, had to beware of all the folly and egotism of the crowd that moved mechanically, and the crowd that darted to safety or disaster on foot. Remote, he bore full responsibility for the safety of all; while the conductor inside, or balancing aloft, maintained law, order, and courtesy hour after hour among a succession of strange travellers, his authority undisputed by any class. The conductor of bus A.I. was a man of abounding vigour. From Shepherd's Bush to Putney Bridge he dealt out change, punched tickets, roared, "No more room outside," to sprightly

girls with slim ankles who aspired to climb the narrow stairs, hauled elderly ladies on to the small platform, and, hanging far out of the bus, bellowed directions to those agitated beings who seek to attain their end by the wrong means and to arrive at Maida Vale in the A.I. bound for Fulham Road. "You want No. 16," he yelled to them, undiscouraged by their looks of furious doubt. Prudence's black eyes gathered in the actions and individuality of this man, as they had gleaned the ways of men and women from Chuha Saidan Shah to Earl's Court. She noted how no indication of criticism escaped him; you could not detect a preference for the young and attractive, a prejudice against the fashionable. Nor when the fluctuating atmosphere of chivalry asserted itself, and a man rose to offer his seat to a tired woman, did the conductor betray a sense that he thought the right thing was being done at last. With regard to the man at the wheel, no secret could be better kept than that of the conductor's opinion of him as a driver. "These men run their show well," thought Prudence. The bus halted between two others, and there descended from one a much decorated wreck of an elderly woman. Not disreputable from lack of social respectability, but from lack of personal dignity. Her soft, shrunken, wrinkled cheeks were rouged, her faded hair dyed, her accordin pleated and jewelled throat bare, and her smart skirt short and girlish. The appearance of this artificial old dame staggered the conductor. She held up her umbrella and enquired "Chelsea?" but received no articulate answer and was left there pointing to the sky. Moved to express himself, the conductor said to a buxom working woman, who sat by the door, "If my wife looked like that I'd flog 'er." Mirth overtook Prudence, a laughing recognition of this

stolid conductor as a social critic and reformer. The working woman agreed placidly, "Serve 'er right. 'Orrid, I call it." And in tones of wrapt wonder the impartial official exclaimed, "It's only gentlemen tolerates a thing like that!" To which the matron, carrying her age with shrewd honour, assented in a profoundly breathed "Ah!"

The bus stopped again, and Prudence rose to leave it, still smiling, still conscious of the vivacity and originality in individuals which defied drab toil and the commonplace of conventionality to render life a mere dull routine. So, reinforced by her contact with her fellows, and following her own flight of fancy, she stepped without caution from the bus and, while horrified exclamations of warning rang in her heedless ears, she was knocked down by the grey shining body of a big car and lay prone and helpless in the London street.

They carried her into a nursing home near Redcliffe Gardens, not fatally injured, but with a broken leg and condemned to lose her hope of holding her child in her arms.



You, against whom all fates have been arrayed ;  
Who heard the voice of God and disobeyed ;  
    Who, reckless and with all your battles lost,  
    Went forth again another chance to try ;  
Who, fighting desperate odds, yet fought to win,  
And sinning, bore the burden of your sin !  
    We have been on the same rough ocean tossed,  
    And served the same wild captain, you and I.

S. R. LYSAGHT.

SIR THOMAS TRENCH followed a trim nurse up endless stairs one windy, dusty day at the end of August. Prudence lay waiting for him in an attic that held a white enamelled iron bed, linoleum on the floor, and all the frigidly cheerful appurtenances of a convalescent's room in a nursing home. For weeks she had known the affliction of thought. Introspection had been a sharp surgery, and loneliness a bitter medicine to this woman. She turned eagerly towards the door when Trench entered.

He stood looking down upon her, marvelling at her fragile charm and the vivid tide of life that flowed so strongly in the expression of her eyes and lips. " Well, you poor dear, how goes it ? " he asked.

" Splendidly ! I shall be well in a few days," she told him. " I was up for two hours this morning."

Trench drew up a chair to her bedside and sat down. " Good," he said emphatically. " That husband of yours needs you."

Prudence ignored this and said, " He wrote and told me that you had turned up at the hotel on your

way home and that you would come and see me. I was so delighted, for I have not had a soul to speak to except the doctor and nurses. They have been very kind to me. I wrote to an old cousin in Tunbridge Wells and she came to London once to see me, and told me all about her rheumatism. It has not been gay." She gave a low laugh as though her predicament were rather comical in her own eyes.

"I took short leave to see my old father. But he did not wait for me," Trench said. "I got the cable telling me he was dead and buried when I arrived at Marseilles, so I lounged off to take a course of baths. Eleanor is at Simla. She couldn't face the monsoon at sea. It was a great surprise to run across Graham. He told me all about you. It has been bad luck, my dear. Pain—wretched! And the expense. Your disappointment, too."

"It was a dreadful disappointment," Prudence said softly. "I feel defrauded, *defrauded*! But there it is. Fate. This accident has been a hard knock financially. The woman in the motor—a Rolls Royce—such an honour for me to be knocked down in fine style—offered to pay half the expenses of the nursing home, but as it was not her chauffeur's fault, and was due to my own carelessness—mooning about—I refused of course."

"You are always an independent soul," said Trench approvingly.

Catching at that note of approval Prudence announced eagerly, "The very moment that I leave this place I'm going to look for a job."

This news failed to rouse the General's enthusiasm. "You are not going to join Graham then?" he asked.

Prudence gave a despairing exclamation and cried, "Of course not! Ages ago in Peshawar, before Paul

was axed, I wanted to earn my own living. He prevented me. Then, for a time, it became impossible. Now it is not only possible but advisable. We are spending his gratuity, and this job of his is only a temporary one. I am determined to go on the stage, or act for the films. If that fails me I will become a mannequin. I should show off dresses beautifully!" She made a little grimace.

Trench nodded thoughtfully. "I see. You will strike out a line for yourself."

She flushed. "In Peshawar I wanted to repudiate our marriage. I have changed as regards that. But I must be economically independent."

He laughed. "Like a young country. You will maintain relations with the big unit, but you must run your own show. That is all very fine for a Colony; all the Colonies have more males than females. They are not feminine affairs. But you are a youthful wife and you want self-determination apart from your own man. It won't answer, you know."

Prudence groaned. "I can't sit and save." She looked at him wistfully. "My generation has to rough it, you see. We aren't drawing-room ladies."

At that the soldier pounced. "Roughing it is healthy work. Nothing weakens our class so much as luxury, and the craving for it. There's Graham—it made me sick to see the life he is condemned to lead. Dancing attendance on a pack of idlers. And here you are plotting to live by the display of your beauty, display of your emotions, or display of mere clothes!"

"Oh, good gracious!" wailed Prudence. "I had no idea you had a puritanical prejudice against the stage for women!"

"Nor have I," he retorted. "If you were an

actress—had talent, and practised an art—I should be enthusiastic. But that's not your game."

"I tell you beggars can't be choosers," said the girl vigorously. "We can't afford the privilege of being fastidious. I wasn't very honest as a wife in Peshawar, but I never went *bankrupt* as—as—an honourable woman. Well, now, I've changed. I'm all for the strictest honesty, and turning an honest penny."

"Quite so," Trench said with emphasis. "But there is a more honourable way. Go out with your husband to the Colonies. His heart is set on that."

"Bother his heart. What about mine?" cried rebellious Prudence.

Seeing her eyes so feverishly bright and her cheeks so flushed Trench dropped the argument, and they talked together quietly till the evening sunshine spun webs of drifting golden light through the open window. He left her with the assurance that he would visit her again to-morrow. The nurses were impressed by the expensive flowers he sent her in the morning, and Prudence happily drank in their fragrant beauty and never counted the cost. "He is my one real, true friend," she thought.

She drew him to her side again by the sheer power of her individuality, which in that little cheap room interested surgeon and nurse alike, and had emerged the stronger for the discipline of pain and meditation.

That afternoon Trench spoke of his own marriage and his career. "I am to have the Northern Army in India," he said. "Great stuff. I am lucky. Eleanor will be a tremendous help. She always steers finely, does Eleanor. I don't play up to her as well as I should. It is an infernal shame, really. She has got a lot of character and she holds her own. It is a funny thing to say about one's wife—I ought

not to be discussing her—but I am very grateful to Eleanor, and very fond of her.”

Prudence maintained the secrecy of her deep black eyes. “And you find that enough?” she asked.

“Sufficient?” He gave a rather sad smile. “One must not be insatiable. I find the quality of what she represents in my life sound. Too good for me, no doubt. And I have my career.”

A quiet silence fell between them and then he said, persuasively, “Before you launch out on a career of your own go and spend a week in France and see Graham.”

“It would mean spending money,” she said in doubtful tones.

“It would be time well spent, I think,” he urged.

She shook her head. “We should only argue uselessly.”

A slight change came over Trench’s face as though he abandoned advice and gave warning. Very leisurely he remarked, “I should think Graham was an attractive fellow to women.”

“Should you?” said Graham’s wife. And then, after a long pause, “Why?”

“He is young, and good at everything he does. He is a nice-looking man. Awfully kind and pleasant to them. I think they like him very much,” said Trench.

“That’s lucky,” remarked Prudence sharply.

“Yes,” he agreed, and added, “in a way. They are for the most part rather the spoilt, rich, fashionable type. Not many of them are really *grandes dames*. I should think they might be damnably impertinent.”

She flushed. “Paul would not stand that!” she cried, and when Trench was silent, she acknowledged

bitterly, "I suppose he has to put up with a lot for the sake of £ s. d."

Trench gave a short laugh. "There was a woman from the Argentine who flattered him a great deal. She was a minx. Pretty, and beautifully turned out. Rolling in money. Her husband was not with her. I think she is there still. You ought to go and keep your eye on her."

With an impatient gesture Prudence demanded, "Do you mean everything, or nothing, by that?"

"I mean just as much as I've said and no more. The lady did not take me into her confidence, nor did Graham. But she was making a dead set at him."

"That should be enough to put a man off," said Prudence scornfully.

"H'mph. It is very flattering, you know. It passes the time most agreeably. And it relieves a man of any anxiety as to whether he bores, or shocks, a woman," Trench said in tolerant tones. "Some men like it."

Prudence began to seethe with indignation. She saw herself immediately as the faithful wife; ill, lonely, and pathetic. She thought of her gallant motherhood and her shattered hopes. The renunciation of her flight to liberty from Peshawar, the abandonment of her schemes for separation and divorce, appeared to be unappreciated sacrifices. Her endurance of poverty and deprivation went unrewarded. There was an element of selfish cruelty, she thought, in this picture of her husband philandering with idle, worldly women while his wife was encountering a grim fate. With these inflaming ideas in her mind she said haughtily, "If Paul prefers such society to mine he is welcome to it. It argues, I think, that I should attain to independence as soon as possible. I refuse to be a burden."

The General wore a broad smile. "You don't give Graham your society," he pointed out. "He has no choice. If you decide in favour of your own financial independence you'll both pay for it." Watching her closely, he summed up. "Your conception of life is extravagant. I do not wonder, for that face of yours has a beauty that conforms to no general rule. But practise a little moderation this time. Give the man a fair chance."

Her sweet temper, as always, stood her in good stead now, and she rejoined amiably, "You are a dear to be so interested. I will think over what you have said."

Trench responded with approval, "Good. I go to the country to-morrow, but shall be up again in ten days. If you decide to join Graham let me know and I will get your passport and see you off. It is a sticky business."

"What a splendid friend you are!" she murmured gratefully.

He made a wry face. "There is no fool like an old fool. If I choose the wiser way it is because I hate an ass. Good-bye, my dear, and bless you."

But Prudence felt herself very far from being blessed by the suspicion and irresolution he had implanted. She lay there sadly, enduring the dull routine and monotony of a trim place for sick persons, and visualising that pretty woman from the Argentine and Paul together. What if Paul smashed their marriage, gave her the right to have it dissolved, to cry the hard bargain off? She admitted that it was an answer to the request she had put to him with passion and tears one night in Peshawar. Acknowledging that by such an event the road might become clear for a rich marriage for Paul, and to work and some undiscernible romance for herself, she yet was

stirred profoundly by distaste, dissatisfaction. If this was the answer to her own propaganda it was not the right answer to her present desire. The trite remark that sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander gave her justice without mercy and was not to her taste. Compensation for the great disappointment that had befallen her lay in a renewal of her motherhood. Paul's child, not some other man's child, should afford her reparation of her devastated dreams. And yet . . . and yet. There was the gambler in her who would play pitch and toss with her last mite were she widowed of Paul's love and protection. On her own fame, her own fortune, her unexpended power of loving, she was prepared to stake her youth, her health, her happiness. But that stake would represent a remnant. To discard one's marriage was to be divorced from part of oneself as well as from another. Not egotism alone but affection, and a fertile memory with all its seeds of companionship, swayed Prudence Graham. She recalled John's declaration that Paul attracted Joyce, and his warning that Prudence did not hold her husband as completely as their legal tie bound him. Love was no slave to lawyers.

Prudence did not forget that John had counted on a spiritual force in his wife. Her soul would guide her heart. And in Graham's character, too, there was warrant for that confidence. But in humanity's record where was the guarantee of consistency? The element of the accidental, the incalculable emotion, was there to be reckoned with always. Perhaps that was why she prayed nowadays.

As hours slipped away she admitted that it was one thing to desert, another thing to be abandoned. Innocence might sometimes sanctify the latter condition, but Prudence honestly perceived that, though



she became its victim, she had instigated the crime. It was her own weapon which would be used against her: she was not very innocent.

At midnight she suspended judgment and decided to investigate the matter. "I'll see for myself," she resolved and, having made up her mind, slept like a child.

The succeeding days, however, brought a reaction of miserable indecision to Prudence. She suspected that her imagination had created a situation. Paul's daily letter said nothing about women; good, bad, or indifferent. Apart from his terse reports she flattered herself that she could read him like a book. He really and truly loved her, possessed that motive power which she herself lacked. She ought to trust him; trust that spiritual force as John did. But she knew passion as a wayward thing, and she was jealous. On the spur of the moment she committed herself to action, by writing to Paul that she would join him. Later in the day she added a postscript which said, "Of course we must not have another child until we are in a position to support a family. I shall try to get a job on the stage, or in cinema work—and if that fails, as a mannequin—directly I am strong enough." Then she despatched the letter to the post to avoid the misery of changing her mind again.

In a brief summing up of her hesitations, her resolves, her efforts, and her submissions, since she had first shattered her domestic peace on her return from the Khyber Pass, she came to the conclusion that as an individual she portrayed in a fragmentary fashion the restless tide of discontent, aspiration, and rebellion which swept across the races of the world, yet in the Anglo-Saxon tribes had not defied law and destroyed tradition. "I don't want to spoil the whole show,"

she reflected. "I am domesticated now and I love motherhood. But I won't be denied an outlet, expansion, my own way."

Trench was as good as his word in saving Prudence from the fatigue and vexation of making arrangements for her journey. She had abandoned crutches and now moved about freely leaning on a stick. The Nursing Home applauded her as a good patient. "Pretty wilful, isn't she?" Trench asked the matron, who replied: "She knows her own mind. She is so keen to be cured she'll listen to reason. Some patients are obstinate and silly, but Mrs. Graham takes advice. Oh yes, she is not imprudent."

When Prudence drove to Victoria Station she could not help comparing the personal nature of the separation from Peshawar with this impersonal farewell to an indifferent London. If she had been obliged to describe her experience in London by one word she must have confessed it to be—disappointment.

Trench saw to her comfort in an efficient, masterful way, and she was very grateful. "You are as good as your own staff," she remarked. "It makes me sad when I think of how Dick used to take charge of you at a railway station, and now—no Dick."

To which he answered: "We don't know what Dick does for us still. A human thought is soundless and invisible. If Dick, out of sight and out of earshot, thinks about us now can we either define, or doubt, his influence?"

Immediately, looking at the train swift as a serpent which was to start her on the way of reunion with Paul, Prudence thought, "Ah, the communion of souls! . . . how the mysterious inspires hope!" And she felt as the superstitious feel when an auspicious portent reassures them on the eve of a journey.

She leant out of the window and said to the General, "We don't forget Dick, do we?"

"I went to see his mother last week," Trench told her. "A silent old lady with a shawl."

The guard began to slam the doors. Prudence thrust out her hand and clasped his. "I love you," she said affectionately.

"Good God!" said the General.

As the train slowly started he announced, bare-headed, with an odd, melancholy smile: "A guard and an express train ensure your safety at this moment, young woman."

Laughing, she waved to him as she was carried away, and at the last she cried, "Mind you give my love to Lady Trench!"

Seated in the carriage, she thought, "Friendship is a tremendous thing. I call him an ideal friend." And life glowed for her.

The torch of her personal beauty burnt ardently that day, and in a dozen little ways fellow travellers reflected its flame. She grew conscious of the disordered stare of a big bald man whose grotesque nose hung hideously from his massive brow like a gargoyle from the roof of a cathedral.

At Dover it became impossible to evade his ponderous services. He obtained a porter for her, heaved her hand luggage out of the rack, and asked her if she had reserved a place on the boat. Nimble escaping from him to the Ladies' Cabin, she lay there resting while they slipped through a smooth sea. "I have been lucky to live among decent people. I should have gone to the devil among a bad lot," she decided. And in a sudden flash of revelation she saw for the first time that she owed her powers of resistance to forces which would have disintegrated her marriage to the standard of just

those "decent people" among whom her lot had been cast.

Throwing her novel aside with a yawn she opened her passport and spread it out on the plush seat, pleased as a child with a new toy. She read that His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs requested and required in the name of His Majesty all those whom it might concern to allow Mrs. Prudence Felicity Graham to pass freely without let or hindrance, and to afford her every assistance and protection of which she might stand in need. "That's good. That is practical help," said Prudence to herself, with a new awareness of her country's grip on her. "But the fat old monster on deck rather misinterpreted the instructions."

She looked at the unflattering photograph which identified her, and read the description of her face: "Forehead, normal. Eyes, dark. Nose, normal. Mouth, normal. Chin, normal. Complexion, pale. Face, oval."

"It might be anybody," she thought gaily. "It is like a novel's account of the heroine, when author or reader lacks imagination."

•

I will pluck from my tree a cherry-blossom wand,  
And carry it in my merciless hand,  
So I will drive you, so bewitch your eyes,  
With a beautiful thing that can never grow wise.

A. WICKHAM.

PRUDENCE fell at once under the spell of France. A land in which there were hero-worship and emphatic gesticulation enthralled her. Mentally she sacrificed to their idols and was mesmerised by their hands making passes in the air. There a crime of passion forces the law itself to fall in love with the shining motive, and men of war in succeeding generations pay homage to a peasant girl whose emotions had a magnificence. The lively interest displayed by the French in the mere act of speaking, of cooking, of bargaining evoked enthusiasm in Prudence. "They carry contradiction to the length of killing. When they conquer they demand complete submission," she cried to herself. "They are the extremists of Europe, but their wit is the saving grace of conversation." It was nothing to Prudence that the British lacked popularity in France, for in their eyes she was *jolie femme* and their glances proclaimed it openly. Moreover, the delicious fact that cash was a commercial traveller that gained in fortune on landing at Calais gratified her exceedingly. Let the statesmen and journalists of Great Britain lecture *la belle France* if it so pleased them, Prudence was too feminine to be critical of a country where men are demonstrative,

fashions seductive, and women marry shrewdly protected by a *dot*. Little sayings of theirs made her catch her breath from sheer pleasure—"Après tout, le courage, c'est une élégance." The swiftness, the debonair gallantry of that, *moved* Prudence. And the climate of Savoy—it was beguiling as a fascinating temperament. The hills bore their great burden of ardent grapes, vigorous vines with leaves splashed with crimson and purple sumptuous fruit. Thirty miles away, beyond the borders of the bright waters of the lake, the birthplace of Bayard displayed him in a rugged statue to rugged hills and the snows of Belledonne. Italy was close at hand, and her crucifixes marked the way between the vineyards and across the mountains. Not far distant, Switzerland guarded neutrality as though it were a sacrament instead of an absence of spirit. Across the Lac du Bourget slumbered the monastery of Hautecombe and the dust of the royal house of Savoy. In hotels dance music animated the easily bored, and every morning the *demi-monde* sipped healing waters. Heavy-featured Jewesses took the baths. Diplomats in search of health lamented the loss of courts and the poverty of society, while each contemplated publishing yet another memoir of bygone celebrities to record words whose utterance no longer carried weight with the young, nor with those angels who never speak slightly of dignitaries in office. Here and there British folk—the stout, the gouty, the stiff—moved, middle-aged and inquisitive, among the crowd discussing cures and expenses, making comments and occasionally forming acquaintances, enjoying the social comedy with their robust sense of humour, and suspicious alike of the reliability and common sense of all foreigners.

Into this prosperous medley slipped young Prudence,

eager, doubtful, precariously poised. Graham met her at the station with a manner that she could not interpret because it was so essentially impersonal, a matter of correct form. She recognised that after illness, at the end of a tedious journey, any woman could rely on Graham to greet her punctiliously, show consideration for her comfort, and abstain from all hostilities. That was established by a code which he approved and it had become a second nature to him. His wife, immediately searching for signs of intense pleasure in her presence, or for evidence of jealous resentment against her decision to take up work in London, found neither the one nor the other. There was a moment's embarrassment when they arrived at the unfashionable little pension where he had engaged a room for her. Iron scroll work forming the gates, the fan above the hall door, the balcony to each window, and the verandah jutting from the ground-floor, gave the villa a chilly and rigid appearance. "I am afraid it is not much of a place," Graham said, red and apologetic.

But, sitting on the edge of a prim bed, with the sun streaming in through the open shutters and gleaming on the stained boards of the bare floor, Prudence looked out at the small and ugly garden—with its bench, its vine, its ornamental stone figure, plot of grass and a motor bicycle with side car on the formal gravel path, and exclaimed with glee: "My dear, I don't think Madame considers me quite proper! What a moustache she has, poor thing! Really, I am just like a naughty lady hidden at a convenient distance. And now you return to the haunts of society. It is most amusing."

"Rotten, I call it," he growled.

"I shall dine with you to-night," she said, smiling up at him.

"There is to be a dance. It may amuse you," Graham told her. "Well, if you are all right here, I'll go."

An awkward pause found Prudence wary, almost stealthy, and suddenly energetic. "It would be in keeping with the scandalous part if you were to kiss me, wouldn't it?" she said.

That he felt constrained was obvious by the deliberation with which he put down his cap and stick again and came towards her. The next moment found her on her own initiative in a close embrace. Hiding her face against his coat she demanded, "Did you feel awful about the baby?"

"Of course," he answered honestly.

She could sense in every fibre that she was detaining him against his will, but she did not unclasp her hands. Still in a smothered voice she questioned, "You agree with me that we must not have another child until we can afford it?"

"Don't let us discuss that now," he urged.

Prudence knew that his self-contained attitude in such close proximity to her was the result of those taboos so early inoculated in him—"Boys must not push little girls roughly"—for she could feel his motionless anger. What would impel this man to be a law unto himself? Prudence was on fire to know. Persisting, she cried, "Why not? I may never again be in the mood to talk about it."

He strained at the leash of her white arms as he retorted, "And I am not in the mood now." Then he gently disengaged himself and, standing at a little distance, said rather stiffly and shyly, "You've



got a will of your own. So have I. But for heaven's sake don't let us have scenes. It did no good in Peshawar."

She let him go, languidly and without protest. On the balcony, welcoming new sights, new sensations, she wondered, "Is Paul smouldering over our old rows at Peshawar, or has that Argentine woman been making him scenes?"

She watched the gleam of dew on the vine leaves, its dark bruise on the pebbles, and the shimmer of the distant lake. "I need a baptism—new birth," she murmured. "And I continue to ask for wine, the intoxication of experience. If Paul has come to think of me as a troublesome fool it probably serves me right, but it is a dangerous conclusion."

And all through the day Prudence felt very serious. She realised that there was a crisis between herself and Graham, and she debated long as to the facts which conditioned that crisis. With misgivings she admitted that she was sure of nothing. Telling off the essential points on her fingers, she looked down upon her eloquent hands with doubtful eyes. "I don't know that I shall like acting or parading, nor can I make sure of success. I am not certain that Paul still loves me. I am unacquainted with this creature from the Argentine. What can I count on as being for or against me?" Her hands hovered apart. "Does he wish me to go to Canada with him? Has he changed his mind about emigrating since he met that woman?" She moved impatiently as one who gropes and is eluded. "I hate poverty, and Paul is poor." Her hands met now with the tip of her right forefinger touching her left. Then she decided rapidly: "Everybody else is a wash-out as far as I am concerned. Thomas Trench, Ronny,

Dick, that Montgomery man, John, all the others—for various reasons they don't affect me one way or the other now. So it lies between Paul and me, *unless* there is a woman who makes an unknown third. I can't see Paul's point of view till I find out whether the Argentine is a reality, or a myth. But surely I know my own mind?" Yet she hesitated. Finally, making a choice, she decided.

"Yes, I want Paul to join me in London when this job comes to an end. That *is* what I want, quite definitely. I should like a wee flat and both of us to work."

Prudence conjured up pictures of their love scenes in that flat. Graham stood for all emotional pleasure to her. They would meet in a hundred gay and poignant ways. She could see herself returning from a triumph on the stage, bringing him good news. Or healing his anxiety and failure by an announcement that her salary had been doubled. In such pictures she found a justification for those battles in Peshawar and a fulfilment of her passion for self-expression and independence. She could find imaginative bliss also in the creation of an hour when an exultant Graham should achieve sudden financial success and bestow his prominence and luxury upon her. In her mind's eye she saw him in that rôle with appreciation, for there was nothing of the sultan in Graham; he would have direct, clean, simple ways of enriching her existence. And, in that spacious life where she need not labour, but could exercise her will, she would be happy at last. Finally, since there was nothing to restrict her imagination, she resolved to gamble on their combined success. One by one her fingers touched. First of all, she would enjoy her fling on the stage and possess all those quick breathing moments when she could reveal

herself to Graham as the mistress of an audience. Secondly, he should make a fortune. A woman might share that to her own enhancement and his content. Thirdly, as the crown of all their adventures, she would have a son and heir.

The sun slipped down behind the hills before she had done with her castles in the air. When lights began to burn the shadows Prudence greeted them with rapture. She loved houses; their secrets, their brilliant windows, their doors behind which love, indifference, and hate were dramatised in hidden lives. It would be unfair, she cried, to ask her to leave the fascinating multitude of dwellings for strange silent wheat—unending wheat. It was on the tide of these day-dreams, which flowed through her life like strong currents in a rough ocean, that she sped to the big hotel. By them she steered her course, and set her will to discover and defeat a rival's influence, and to win Graham's co-operation with her plans and aims.

If Prudence entered the lounge of the hotel as Cinderella she was a very vital incarnation of that successful lady. She instantly attracted considerable attention. The hotel staff accorded her loveliness the Latin workers' recognition of the unattainable, which in a cruder generation rolled just such heads as sour grapes into a basket through the little window. A wealthy Belgian, whose bald scalp failed to excite that confidence which grey hairs inspire, became all eyes and calculation. A group of Americans suggested half a dozen identities for her, none insignificant. An Italian profiteer was transformed on the instant into a man of emotion. And she realised the atmosphere which her presence created while she remained incognito. To introduce her by name was to present the unimportant, and make social

interest tepid. It was her strenuous intention to become entitled to a different reception.

Every critical faculty in Prudence recognised that out of this cosmopolitan crowd the man disengaging himself and coming forward to greet her was the one by whom any pretty woman would prefer to be claimed. If an actor meant the author of action and not a mere stage-player, here was the actor who could stir her feelings and agitate her mind. As soldier, sportsman, comrade and lover, association with him had compelled an innate satisfaction. Something in her nature was constrained to derive a secret pleasure from his touch, his voice, his appearance. In this moment of reunion under the appraising eyes of the worldly, Prudence enjoyed to the top of her bent her dramatic sense of having appeared on this vivid stage from a cheap, frugal pension with the right to appropriate Graham as her own.

Together they moved, side by side, out of the mundane lounge into the dark refinement of the courtyard, where pollarded trees hung a leafy canopy between diamonds and stars, and the air was free from smoke and scent. Prudence felt themselves to be veiled from gaudy glare and isolated with the grave splendour of the sky, the dumb, violent demands of night and nature. Then, in a few steps, they were on marble again under electric light where a band, loudly sensuous and gay, provoked intimate conversation at a hundred tables.

"They feed you well here," Graham remarked. He wanted Prudence to enjoy a feast. He was very conscious that, in her simple black dress, she looked an exquisitely well-bred little lady. The head waiter, bowing, offered her the enticements of the menu as

though his temperament was sincerely hospitable to her feminine charms, and delighted in serving the élite. But, as usual, Prudence did not mind what she ate, she trifled with it. A little fish, an ice, some fruit gave her pleasure. She was angered by the humiliating fact that she banqueted by chance in a caravanserai among the wealthy whose homes held a greater luxury, a more fastidious fare, than hotels could proffer.

"You ought to grow fat in this place," Prudence said presently with amusement.

"I hope to heaven I don't. I have lost weight, I think. In London I got no exercise and here I have any amount." Graham gave a serious reply to a serious matter.

It was a curiously silent meal. Graham seemed to have no news to impart. His programme as he sketched it appeared to consist of "getting up" things; tennis and bridge tournaments, golf competitions and dances. It took a lot of doing, he said. "They are a rum crowd. Look at 'em." It was too late for the English, who came earlier in the year. With the women he had any amount of trouble because they lacked sporting instincts. He gave her, gravely, several glaring instances of competitors who did not play the game. They had a way, he said, of begging that a dance should be arranged and then clearing off to the Casino to gamble and leaving him with the thing on his hands—a perfect frost.

"Who asked you to have to-night's dance?" Prudence enquired. All the time her eyes had been searching, searching. No visible table had escaped their scrutiny.

"An Argentine—Madame Valaria," Graham replied, and added, "She is very nice."

"I never know what you mean when you call a woman 'nice,'" drawled Prudence. As he made no effort to enlighten her she enquired, "Would you call a woman you were ardently in love with 'very nice'?"

"Why not?" he retorted, his eyes quite blank and stubborn.

"Am I nice?"

"Sometimes." Graham granted that with his sudden jolly smile.

His wife groaned. "If you were compelled to burst into a love song about me do you know the words that you would use?"

"Can't imagine for the life of me."

She fired them at him with mock emotion, "'When she is good she is very, very good, and when she is bad she is horrid.'"

"Very sound," he responded.

Her thrilling voice derided this, "When one thinks of all the wonderful things that might be said, the dulness of that almost kills me!"

Graham burst out laughing. Into her eyes crept the little triumphant light which shines there when a woman succeeds in entertaining a man. From the other tables elderly pairs who had not a spontaneous laugh in common watched those young married people as though they were in a world apart. A fat Spanish woman, continuing to note every look and gesture that passed between them, presently exclaimed to her husband, "But see, she has angered him now. He will not be easy to manage, that one. It is she who desires that love should be made. If he does not make it, will she not turn to those who seize an opportunity?"

"Oh, these English—who knows?" shrugged the man, and made play with his eyes: old

tricks to which the woman responded superficially.

Prudence, strung up to probe Graham's feelings, had persisted. "You may be amused, but it is gospel truth. I'm all for love; you are all for justice."

And at that his whole face darkened. "Since when have you been all for love?" he asked. It was a direct accusation of indifference.

She was elusive. "You know I am in love with life. Success and ardour appeal to me. The expression of any creative energy fascinates me. If the world were phlegmatic, people could not sit here with wine, music, lights, jewels, fascinating clothes. I adore the sensation of pleasure. Breath means zeal and zest to me. So I think if you make love to a woman you ought to make it in passionate speech and not in moderate statements—that's simply ghastly. Holding your tongue does not mean holding your own, let me tell you." As he did not utter a word, Prudence broke out again in a trivial tone, "For goodness' sake don't do the strong silent man's stunt, Paul. He's like a dead language and I prefer something I can pick up easily."

She was not prepared for the low-voiced ferocity of his outburst. "My God, how you can goad a man!"

Instantly she became gentle. "I'm sorry," she murmured.

After a just perceptible pause he said, apologetically, "So am I." Then he raised his glass and drank to her, saying, "Here's to our meeting, Prudence."

In response she pledged him with a queer wistful smile hovering around her lips, "And to our health, wealth, and happiness," she sighed.

"Aha, she has made the rendezvous, that little hen!" declared the watchful Spanish woman.

After their reconciliation the Grahams fell silent. She was now reassuringly conscious that she could still touch Graham to the quick, but various uncertainties enervated her. She would discover the extent of the Argentine's influence to-night, but all discussion of their own plans had better wait for a more favourable opportunity. "If Paul really loves me he'll do as I ask," she thought.

Graham on his side recalled her uncomplaining comradeship in London lodgings, her disappointment, her illness and pain, and condemned his savage temper. He wanted her to have a good time to-night, was pathetically concerned not to spoil her fun when at last she was in her element, surrounded by a garish luxury.

While they kept their precarious peace Madame Valaria suddenly made her appearance. She came rustling from behind a pillar which had concealed her. When she paused by the Grahams' table and Paul made an introduction Prudence summed her up in one word—"Common!" But whether you ranked her high or low the verdict did not put her out of action. Her private life might be vulgar or vicious, but her appearance presented no apology on behalf of her conscience. It was rather in the nature of a financial prospectus: she was quite obviously worth so much in pearls, diamonds, and onyx. Prudence thought she had never seen finger-nails with so high a polish, lips more lavishly painted, skin more swarthy or hair that had greater spring and exuberance. This woman possessed a glorious figure, and the clinging golden tissue that clothed her revealed every line. She moved well, cleverly. When she spoke she seemed to guarantee a certain amiability—like



a cat purring—and to yield, to flatter. Prudence guessed her to be at her zenith; a woman with education and experience. Given official credentials, she would hold her own at any public function. Coming, as she did, from a land newly rich, and not old in social tradition, European society would never reject this handsome creature while she was wealthy and avoided intolerable scandal. Conservative aristocrats might not hear of her existence, but she would entertain the less exclusive in every capital. It seemed that she was entertaining to-night—giving a large dinner party to make the dance a success. She spoke deprecatingly of her “little efforts,” implied bored but skilful exertions, indicated adroitly a kind heart and easily pleased disposition, and unsparingly condemned the critical and apathetic. “Your husband is so wonderful!” she declared to Prudence. “If it had not been for him I could not have endured this place. Not even for the sake of my health. No, indeed. And many others say the same. He makes us all happy. I’ve never met anyone like him, he is so marvellously kind. But I must not tell *you* that, Mrs. Graham. You’ll find people here who can’t appreciate the trouble he takes. Their manners are atrocious—I expect he has told you? But I do think that some of us know that for energy, and an extraordinary power of getting things done in the right way, there is just no one in this world to touch Captain Graham. At least that’s what I always say. Truly I do.” She turned to Paul. “I want *one* little word with you afterwards. We are having coffee on the verandah if you and your wife will join us. It is only something I hope you’ll put right if you can. I know you will. Till then I must join the crowd I’ve dragged here.” She glided away from them with a gesture that

seemed to indicate a graceful sacrifice of her own inclinations.

Prudence cast a long look at her husband when Madame Valaria withdrew. Had he betrayed a flattered self-consciousness, or any sign of sly susceptibility, he would have lost his hold on Prudence in that instant. But his simplicity, which was the indispensable condition of his dignity, kept its own counsel unmoved. If he secretly thought this woman "very nice" or "very dangerous," one thing was certain—she had not made him a fool or a prig about her.

People began to desert the dining-room for the verandah, the courtyard, and the lounge. Streaming past the Grahams' table many paused to exchange a word with Paul. Undoubtedly he was popular here. If these people made use of him they also appreciated him. All the men approached him with good fellowship. The women kept their patronage for rebellious Prudence when introduced, they deferred to the man. "Had Paul lost his head among these peacocks I should have *hated* him!" cried his wife, all her nerves on edge.

The Argentine woman swept out, with a party of more or less distinguished people. As they retreated Prudence noted what decoration meant to a woman; the undulations of shining garments, the poise on golden or silver shoes, the gloss of well-groomed hair, the sparkle of diamonds, continued to appeal and charm while faces were hidden.

"I like that thing Madame Valaria has got on to-night," Graham remarked, breaking a tense silence. "It suits her."

Prudence, her smouldering eyes on the woman's very bare back, said loftily, "I should call it a some-

what inadequate fire-screen for her temperament, myself."

The criticism touched some discrimination in Graham, won recognition, and instantly provoked his rare but vehement laughter. Out it broke, a low "Ha-ha-ha" that shook his broad shoulders and transformed his face. "Yes, she's like that," he agreed confidentially, and got up at once as though his admission of her type was complete and nothing would induce him to say more.

When the Grahams joined Madame Valaria's party Prudence still felt out of it all and a critical spectator. Pairs began to dance, but she pleaded fatigue and found herself isolated with first one elderly man and then another. They were complimentary, and more or less experimental. When they spoke of affairs they were not uninteresting to her. She thought they had the expensive efficiency of Atlantic liners equipped with steam and wireless, while youth plunged through the ocean of life under lovely sails, primitive, with bare decks and scant provisions. Youth was her only comrade, for the young were all in the same boat by an unescapable affinity. To voyage with these middle-aged notabilities was to be shipped as something perishable, preserved only by being frozen. Under her inscrutably gentle manner she was restless, alien, and remote. That the accumulation of this world's goods was as a rule in the hands of the older men seemed to her a monstrous bribe by which the world insinuated dishonesty into the emotions of women.

Graham worked hard, and Madame Valaria caught him with difficulty for that little confidence which she had planned. Prudence saw her, wrapped to her sparkling earrings in a sable cape, lead him out

into the courtyard. Jealousy suddenly penetrated the wife's nerves like a knife's thrust. She craved an addition to her own natural resources, and recognised the craving. These rich women acquired it by adornment and sensuous surroundings; artists possessed it through their amazing qualities. What could she summon to her aid? She had no command of material advantages; no genius. But just outside personality, beyond visible manifestations, there were mysterious forces. Prudence felt, with an agony of unpreparedness, that to assimilate and absorb them a certain condition was necessary. Here, for instance, in this thronged room with its sophisticated atmosphere, an innocence of heart was essential. Though a high degree of integrity might place her spirit in touch with the unseen—the supernatural—how was she to obtain at this queer crisis the intense faith whose terrific prayer might drag Paul back from that shadowy grove? She recognised her arrogant shallowness, her dim perceptions, her mental inertia, as forming a character which she had deliberately made her own to her fatal impoverishment.

The tolerant banker who sat beside her found her inattentive and, he thought, rather shy. But he forgave her because of the curiously sensitive expression on her little pale face, the graceful agitation of her whole slight frame. "There is something in this one," he decided. "She can be lovable without an effort." When the door opened to admit Graham and his companion, he watched Prudence and exclaimed to himself, "That is the look of the honeymoon—there are the wonder and the doubt!"

She had left his side in a flash and by an impulsive movement had detached Paul from Madame Valaria,

claimed him, and engaged him in conversation. Prudence was saying that she was too tired to remain another moment, would he now escort her home? The Argentine moved on alone. "The girl is extraordinarily taking," the banker decided. "And not a penny to bless themselves with, I suppose. Hard luck. These improvident marriages play the devil with a woman's life." In spite of his lip service to discretion, his kindly heart warmed to the young pair. "Prosperity is a damned poor substitute for romance. I don't pity them."

"While you get your wraps I must have a word with Mrs. Dormer. She wants my blood about something, Madame Valaria says. Perhaps she does, perhaps she doesn't. Madame Valaria revels in ructions and how she survives them all defeats me," Graham told his wife, who—looking up into those very dominating blue eyes of his—knew by swift intuition that the Argentine woman had met her match in him and been broken.

The spell of peace fell upon Prudence with this discovery, and she put on her evening cloak by a long mirror without so much as a glance at herself. She was married to Graham, and right was might in his case. She laughed then—at her rebellions, her inconsistency, her suspicions—and on the wave of that mirth, which lifted the corners of her mouth and touched the lower lids of her eyes like a ripple, went out to join her husband.

Close to the office, by the hall door, stood Graham, his back turned to Prudence. With him was a tall woman all in grey. From head to foot she was one silver shimmer, and her voice with a strident American accent was uplifted to berate him. Most blatantly she was telling him off; not as an indignant equal but as an upstart might chide a person deemed of

no importance. Prudence caught something about the hour at which the dance began—an hour changed, it seemed, to suit Madame Valaria, and inconvenient to the guests of the speaker. Everything was wrong; the number of dances, the time allotted to the intervals. She had stipulated for certain arrangements and had been let down. Her insolence was extreme, and in a second the partisan in Prudence Graham was alert. Paul would endure nonchalantly from this woman treatment for which he would have kicked a man, but she sped to his side, a slim figure all in black as though clothed in the very darkness of her wrath.

Her clear voice clashed through the other's high-pitched torrent of speech with the question, "Paul, don't you think it would be better to let this acquaintance of yours write to the *Times* about her grievances?"

Graham wheeled round—what would Prudence say next, standing there with the bit between her teeth? The American, taken aback and scenting danger, was completely at a loss how to deal with the situation. To her Prudence drawled, "People sometimes write better than they speak and all that might look well in print. If you sign it 'A would-be lady in difficulties' all your friends will recognise you." Then she turned to Graham, "Shall we go?" And they went out through the swing-doors.

The banker had been quietly purchasing stamps at the office. Now he blandly met Mrs. Dormer's dazed eyes. "Did you ever hear anything to equal that? The insolence——" she began shrilly.

"Hard to beat, hard to beat," he agreed in his pleasant voice. "But I won't give you away, I promise."

Uncertain of him, she babbled, "The manners of the woman!"

"Quite a harsh judge, wasn't she? Critical and candid," said the banker.

"If she were my countrywoman I'd disown her, I would indeed!" Mrs. Dormer cried, as she departed, conscious of defeat.

In the rattling taxi Prudence asked, deeply shocked, "Paul, did you want to murder her?"

"A woman like that is an infernal nuisance," he growled.

"Those people are the limit," Prudence declared. She was half crying with fatigue, strain, and angry excitement. "I don't know how you stand them."

"I'm paid to stand them," he said grimly. "But I can look after myself all right. Don't you worry, Prue."

"A man is so handicapped against a woman," she murmured sympathetically.

"That's nothing new," he said. In the dark she thought he smiled, but she was not sure, and since the morning she had felt a rough edge in Graham and it hurt her.

They drove through the little town and as they neared the pension he exclaimed, "I feel a cad being at the hotel while you are here."

"It rather amuses me, the contrast," she assured him. Something new and tender in her that had first stirred her heart when she became a mother, longed to remove the sting of their poverty from Graham's mind. She rattled on. "I wonder what the people at the pension think of us."

In the whiteness of the moonlight the villa looked like a highly respectable ghost in a nightgown with stiff frills.

Prudence got out and stood on the steps with the latchkey. "Aren't you coming in?" she said in a low voice.

"No," Graham replied. The taxi started again. "I'll be round at three o'clock to-morrow," he called.

Ten minutes later the clock struck midnight. Prudence cried to herself, "To-morrow!" Then she knelt down beside her bed in passionate supplication.



I will not let thee go.  
I hold thee by too many bands !  
Thou sayest farewell, and lo !  
I have thee by the hands,  
And will not let thee go.

ROBERT BRIDGES.

FOUR o'clock the next day found the Grahams on the mountains close to the far-famed Col du Chat. Down in the valley the lake lay sleeping. Over their heads clouds signalled in the sky and wrote with their shadows upon the rocks and grassy uplands. Paul's shoulders, raised by one muscular arm, blotted out distant miles from Prudence's view. On this remote summit the woman had decided to challenge her destiny. She launched her attack very gravely, very intently.

"Paul, you detest talking. But we must understand each other to-day. I'm no good at deciphering signs and wonders and reading character. So for heaven's sake make your proposal and I'll say 'yes' or 'no.' If I suggest my plan first you'll declare—'the woman tempted me.'"

"I thought you had made up your mind?" he said slowly, filling a pipe.

"I do that daily, as your Madame Valaria makes up her face." She shrugged her shoulders. "But two heads are better than one. I want us to *agree* on a plan. After all, we're married to each other."

"That's your bad bargain," Graham said grimly.

"But I would not change it," his wife said. "I want to change other things, not that."

"That's good news." Whatever the tidings wrought in the man they did not deter him from finishing the immediate business with his pipe and putting it in his mouth to see if it was drawing well. Then he asked, "Since when?"

"Since I found I was a mother," she answered.

"But that's all over?" he suggested very gently.

"Its influence remains," Prudence told him.

"You wrote that you did not want another child." There was a doubt in his tone.

"Until we could afford it."

"I see. Well, I agree with you there. But it is hard on you, Prue." He lay very still, a carven figure. When he spoke his voice created a sense of desolation. "A man of my age who cannot support wife and child is not in a man's position. The thing's ghastly."

"It is not your fault," she interposed.

Graham went on. "I've *got* to put it right, and quickly too. It is the sort of situation which touches a fellow's self-respect."

"I respect you." Prudence attempted to stem a tide upon which he might embark on any enterprise. There was something here of male desperation and vigour against which she feared to strive in vain.

"Do you? Not altogether, I think—not altogether." Graham appeared quite convinced as to that, and gave her the impression of discerning not the obvious but the obscure. "You might become, you know, a trifle patronising. You go by what other people think."

Prudence was one rapid exclamation of innocence and repudiation.

He interrupted her to say, "You'd not be to blame—entirely due to circumstances." After a pause Graham went on deliberately, "If you have a job of your own, and I have not, you'll want to run the show."

Again she broke out, in some confusion: "Paul, you *know* I'm not a horrid domineering sort of woman. I think that is very unjust and unkind—I do, honestly."

He held to his view. "It is not a case of manner, but of *moral*. The influence of all the conditions would tend that way. I could not stick it. Simply could not."

Alarmed, she sought refuge by temporising. "Leave that point for the moment. You are hinting at my plans. I want to hear yours." When he met this in silence she begged him to speak. "*Please*, Paul dear."

"I am going to Canada."

Prudence said to herself breathlessly, "And he *is*, too." His words seemed to set him on his journey. This was the starting-point.

She cried out bitterly, "Departure is easy for a man! When *I* wanted to leave you prevented me."

"I do not wish to leave you now," he said; "come with me."

It was an appalling invitation. She looked out at the wide landscape lying at their feet through which she knew how to find the path back to shops, hotels, villas—organised comfort and company. She had gone to India as one might go to a theatre, an exhibition, with a party of acquaintances. To emigrate to Canada was to risk all without gambling for high stakes and quick returns. It was to confront solitude, greet hardship and monotony. Not gold and silver, but daily bread, was the prize. Denied

excitement, she must possess endurance—her dreams, her castles in the air, were mere clouds that burst. Going to Canada meant becoming a Canadian: it was not only to be absent from England, but to exchange her for the land of adoption.

"Look here," she said tensely, "see that tree against the sky-line? Would you detach its roots from the ground and try to attach them to the rain and the sunshine in the air? Not you. You are not mad. But you would calmly ask me to uproot myself and transform all my receptivity, all my ambitions and pleasures. Europe may be pretty awful, but I'm one with the millions who cling to it in spite of everything. All the charm of living, all the charm of *people*, is centred in Europe for me. Give me London! It is my Tom Tiddler's ground. Come and fight it out there. Why should I succeed and you fail? Probably you will triumph and I shall take the knock. I'd rather *you* won than win myself. I swear I would. In Peshawar I was an idiot, experimenting with all sorts of ideas. Don't throw that in my teeth now, Paul. I should be so useless in Canada. My dear, do you not realise how useless I should be? You'd die in a week if I cooked for you!" She gave a nervous little laugh.

"Canada is a splendid country," he affirmed.

"But England is my home for better or worse," protested Prudence. She saw that she had not prevailed over his decision and she reproached him, "Don't you think you are being selfish, Paul?"

"That is the worst of arguing . . . one says things. . . ." He wriggled his shoulders. "I have not got much choice, you know. The possibilities are: to return to London with you next month and hunt for a job; you think you can get one, my prospects don't strike me as rosy—or to emigrate

together. Or I can hand you over the cash and emigrate alone."

"I won't take the cash," she cried violently.

"You cannot prevent me from placing it to your credit at the bank," Graham told her.

She wrung her hands. "You don't seem to mind leaving me."

"What does it matter that I love you?" he furiously demanded. "You take all that . . . and don't want it, don't need it. I am going to Canada to make a home that I can offer you. I must make it possible for us to have another child. I'm not prepared to live on kicks and kisses any longer."

"Kicks!" She called heaven and earth to witness that the world dare not kick so formidable a character.

"That sort of thing," he maintained doggedly. In his sombre humiliation Prudence suddenly perceived the terrible sensitiveness of unrequited love. "I should be like that, only worse. Fiercer, more resentful," she acknowledged to herself. To look for signs of love and never see them, to hope to inspire interest and hope in vain, to tax too highly and complain too often, offer the unacceptable, and alienate affection by giving no peace nor rest—that would be Prudence Graham.

Using all her art she said, leaning towards him, "Well—the kisses, then, won't you miss them?"

To this he would give no answer.

She tried another way. "Stay with me, Paul." The sky and hills were silent, as though life listened. She tore moss from a rock beside her with agitated fingers. "I'll be nice if you do, I promise. Much nicer than I've ever been till now."

"Stay and be petted, eh? That's your idea of a life for a man!"

"I say 'stay,' you say 'come.' It's pull devil, pull baker," she wailed. "If you love me you'll stay."

"One does not cling like a parasite to one's wife," he told her grimly. "I'm in a false position unless I can pay our way. In London I shall never be much use. But in Canada I am convinced that I shall find my feet. I believe in myself as a farmer." He suddenly turned to her, eager, companionable. "I'm giving you a lead, Prue—come on!"

She covered her face with her fingers as though to shut out a vision of Paul Graham the farmer, and broad lands, and quiet years. "No!" she exclaimed. "No, no, no. I can't and won't."

The tragedy to the man was complete. The Army, India, his wife—all gone from him. He was cut off, in the urgency of his youth, from what was dearest to his heart. Over the horizon he followed a last hope—Canada.

Prudence uncovered her eyes. "So that's that," she said in amazement. "You say—follow, or depart. This is the parting of the ways. You've got the oddest notion of matrimony, I must say. Well, Paul—what happens now?"

He sketched plans in rough outline. She would have a certain sum to her credit. He would take just enough to gain admission to Canada. Then he hoped by working on a farm to learn his job. They must set aside as a nest-egg the cash required to pay a single passage across the Atlantic. It was necessary to keep that bridge intact, he said. To have their lines of communication cut would be utter disaster.

Prudence took up the tale. He, or she, might be ill. Letters were a miserable form of intercourse. His address would be uncertain for some time. It would terrify her to touch the money at the bank,

and see it melting, melting. It would be very lonely in cheap lodgings. She expected she would cry her eyes out, often. And if she needed him in a hurry he would not be there. She repeated that he had a *very* queer idea of marriage.

"We shall go through a bad time and take risks," he admitted. "But when I make good it will be all right."

"You'll expect me to join you, meekly, then?" she cried.

"Not meekly," he said, with grim humour. "Not if I know you."

"Beaten," she retorted. "Forced to give in at the end. Just when I've succeeded on the stage perhaps. Suppose I'm making five thousand a year and you are making five hundred—what then?"

"I couldn't become dependent on your damned five thousand," Graham told her.

Prudence shivered. "Your pride is fatal," she muttered. "Fatal."

He said nothing, so with a sigh she continued, "And yet pride doesn't warn you of a danger you choose to ignore. What of other men, Paul, if you go away and leave me?"

Again he restated the position, saying, "I ask you to come with me."

"Ah—you try to put me in the wrong that way!" she interposed, alert.

Graham turned on her with indignation. "I'm finding a way out for us. If you won't follow—you won't. A man can't make you. But there is no use threatening me with what fellows may do behind my back. If I were still in the Army and ordered on service, could I be with you to keep an eye on them? Don't you go imagining that I don't know what you are really like with men." There was a pause in

which Prudence wondered as to the nature of the opinion he held so strongly. "It is up to me—to defend you, isn't it? What's the chief danger—I'll put it to you that way? I bet you that you have not got it clear. You'd answer, 'that we remain poor all our lives.' Or, 'that we chuck each other.' I tell you your daily bread must be the first consideration now. I've got to make sure of it. And—good Lord! you're not a rotter, Prue. I trust you."

So that was his conception of their problem. He was under an overwhelming obligation to support her. Through the fog of circumstance he saw that light and followed it. Moreover, it was plain now to Prudence that this man was impelled to betake himself where he could best use his manhood. Work to him was life. His labour was no shadowy antic, nor mere standardised exchange for a wage. His vocation was the matter in which he was a law unto himself. Prudence recognised that he would stand out for this individual liberty against every temptation she might offer. He was no fanatic, for he had awaited the right opportunity, had sought and accepted temporary employment which he loathed. And towards her he had the spirit which might yet save their marriage. He trusted her.

"Yes," she said. "You may trust me. For one thing—I have more faith than in those Peshawar days. Spiritual values do matter to me, now." Then she asked him, wistfully, "I choose to stay behind and have a shot at acting. Men are funny—shall you feel free to turn to another woman because I refuse to go with you?"

In an instant she knew she had touched something highly strung, terribly personal, instinctively silent in him. But he gave her an answer. "No. That will be all right, I think, Prue."



And a moment later she exclaimed, "We are dreadfully conservative, really, you and I. Here we go pronouncing the exclusive promises of marriage all over again."

The spell of an autumn evening wove itself into the air. The grasses were astir with it, and all the little noises of twig and leaf. Solitary hill-tops catching the sunset's glow seemed to exchange greetings. As the light faded, Prudence realised with a shock that their final decision was taken, that there would be a to-morrow and a to-morrow and then a day when Graham would depart to Canada. A farewell threatened her emotions. Already it had laid its sorrows upon the man. He was stretched out upon the grass in an attitude of doom. And his unspoken pain was catching. It had her enmeshed before she was aware that her imagination had put her in touch with his suffering. She dropped her face into her hands.

The evening star shone above the man lying there at rest but not at peace; and above the woman crouching beside him unable to face what was required of her. In the valley the dim lake had turned grey.

Suddenly Prudence threw up her hands, lifted her eyes. *It was possible to make Graham happy.* She had seen that—encountered the vision of it—as clearly as it had always been in her power to visualise her own ambitions, and depict her own desires. Fate enabled her to give Graham what he wanted. Only by her action could he be rescued from mortification, loneliness. Her very lips became white. Her heart stormed. And, despite her angry rejection of the picture, which slipped into her mind like a shadow through a doorway, she was forced to admit a comparison between brown men following that

quiet figure at her feet, following to France, following to Mesopotamia, facing wounds and death—and she, the wife, shirking, profiteering.

To the end that he should be happy—oh, it was unbearably urgent to do something! All that existed of pity and championship in the world sped to that achievement. . . . She could rejoice in it. Could rejoice in it beyond measure. In generosity there were gifts which no poverty could sterilise, no wealth could outbid. The energy of her need to *create* this happiness amazed her, suffocated her. Prudence retreated before its increasing impulse as a woman might stumble backwards with face still turned to the desire of the eyes, with hands still outstretched towards objects from which her feet carried her away.

She had no necessity so vital as this one. It knew no law of habit, nor of weights and measures. It was not written, it was not conventional. It assumed supreme control of her personality. To give this man delight and laughter and an abundance of joy formed in Prudence an immediate and sufficient purpose. She could not see him suffer a moment longer.

“Paul!” Her voice rang out to meet dull echoes among the rocks. She seemed to call him back from an immense distance.

Graham turned to her, startled. His face held amazement when he saw hers—white, with a sensitiveness that was delicate as music, and in her eyes an utter unself-consciousness, a great expectation.

She stood up, and stammered a little. “I am coming with you after all—to Canada. Don’t . . . don’t be too surprised about it! Tell me, *quick*, are you glad? Are you simply too glad for anything?”

He was. "Coming with me? Honour bright?" Graham was on his feet in a flash.

It was worth while. To conjure up, in the presence of adversity, that strong joy was indeed a triumphant act. Her low laugh broke out. "Are you pleased—are you pleased beyond words?"

"Why have you changed?" That persistent need to understand was a check—but she shared it.

"Ah—why?" she echoed. "I can't bear to see you miserable, frustrated; perhaps it is that. Anyhow, I'm coming."

"Why have you changed?" he again whispered. "Why?"

"Because I have fallen in love with you at last," cried Prudence. "There can be no other reason."

•

To an open house in the evening  
Home shall men come,  
To an older place than Eden  
And a taller town than Rome ;  
To the end of the way of the wandering star,  
To the things that cannot be and that are,  
To the place where God was homeless  
And all men are at home.

G. K. CHESTERTON.

THE great ship moved through a calm Atlantic in glorious weather. The air might have been distilled from stars and ice and sea, it was so sparkingly cold and pure and strong. Prudence, woven into a rug like a caterpillar in a cocoon, had her little nose thrust deep in an illustrated paper that depicted the bedroom scene of the latest successful play. A pretty actress displayed her charms, and Prudence sighed to herself, "I shall always feel that I could have done it."

It was Sunday and All Souls' Day, and presently the girl disentangled herself from the rug and went below to the dining-saloon. There in mid-ocean for half an hour the liner enshrined Christianity's most passionate mystery. Graham did not leave the deck. Shyness withheld him from sacramental life. "Evensong is about my form," he told his wife.

He rejoined her when she was once more in her long deck-chair with warm cheeks and glowing eyes. "Done with church?" he asked cheerfully.

"I wish we could have been on deck. My face was buried in a red plush seat. But I felt the wings ! Through all the throb of machinery and the pressure of steam, I just touched that . . . the supernatural, its strength and its simplicity. The giving is so appallingly generous. Do you know I think love—the real thing—is very strict. It has no hazy, lax ways. It is a pilgrim, not an excursionist. And such companionship—'all the company of Heaven,' they say." She laughed up at him.

Graham was a happy man. His wife was happy, too. She made a song about it, being built that way, and he listened, well content. He had his own way of pursuing joy, and she watched him in comical resignation when he settled himself down with maps and documents.

"Look here," he said with great satisfaction. "There it is—see ?" He pointed to a place on the map. "What's the matter with Saskatchewan ? Nothing. We'll make a good start. You wait till I've learnt a bit and then, under the terms of the Soldier Settlement Act, and with my gratuity, I'll acquire quite a decent estate. Millions of buffalo pastured in the plains and fertilised the soil for centuries. It is splendid soil, Prue. Our men in the old Salt Range would envy me. You break the sod and get it sown to wheat by the middle of May. Are you listening ? You are not."

"Yes, I am in a way," she murmured. Her eyes were fixed on a pair that walked the deck. The woman was said to have left her husband for the man. She looked young and self-assertive ; the man seemed to adore her. Prudence took an immense interest in them.

"Well, perhaps Manitoba is more your style ?" Graham tolerantly suggested.

"Easier to spell," said Prudence with cheerful indifference.

"They go in for stock raising and dairy work there. Manitoba grows first-class wheat. Here, look at this photo. They are ploughing virgin soil, see?"

She peeped. "Nothing but men and ploughs and land," she remarked. Her tone was indulgent.

"Yes, but——" he hurled the pages over. "It is all right for you, too. The dairy, you know. And if we went to British Columbia there are bees. I must say I'm specially taken with Saskatchewan, but in Manitoba they go in for poultry, and swine. There are hundreds of thousands of swine there."

"How disgusting!" Prudence exclaimed. And she turned to examine his sunburnt face, her eyes tender. "Paul, you idiot, I'm not emigrating from love of bees or beasts, but because your country is my country. I stick to you."

"I know, darling," he said with great content. "But you'll get keen about the bees."

While he continued his all-absorbing study of the new land towards which they adventured, she faced other realities. Though the world's bazaar still lured her, she went willingly to its fields in order that Paul should pay their way in its markets. For the first time in her life she was giving without thought of personal gain. That was love. Now in spirit as well as in letter she fulfilled her marriage contract, a woman you could deal with on a sound basis. Turning to the west she remembered the east; those bare feet, those slow moving cattle; the toil and the fortitude. Her temperament was persistent, and in her flights of fancy she pictured Graham at some distant date as a leader among Canadians. A man with a future, and a man with a son.

Together they walked to the ship's bow and listened to the thunder of the Atlantic.

"Content, Prue?" the husband asked.

"Thankful," she answered. Then she stood poised between sea and sky, in rapid movement towards a distant goal, and she cried, "Never mind the middle-aged who have lost their illusions. . . . Let's be thankful, you and I, for inestimable love, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory!"







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